

ARABIA

VOL. I



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HISTORY
OF
A R A B I A,
ANCIENT AND MODERN:

CONTAINING

A DESCRIPTION OF THE COUNTRY—AN ACCOUNT OF ITS INHABITANTS,
ANTIQUITIES, POLITICAL CONDITION, AND EARLY COMMERCE—THE LIFE
AND RELIGION OF MOHAMMED—THE CONQUESTS, ARTS, AND LITERATURE
OF THE SARACENS—THE CALIPHS OF DAMASCUS, BAGDAD, AFRICA, AND
SPAIN—THE CIVIL GOVERNMENT AND RELIGIOUS CEREMONIES OF THE
MODERN ARABS—ORIGIN AND SUPPRESSION OF THE WAHABEES—THE
INSTITUTIONS, CHARACTER, MANNERS, AND CUSTOMS OF THE BEDOUINS:

AND A COMPREHENSIVE
VIEW OF ITS NATURAL HISTORY.

BY ANDREW CRICHTON.

WITH A MAP, AND TEN ENGRAVINGS BY JACKSON.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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PREFACE.

IT has been frequently remarked with surprise and regret, that whilst the annals of almost every nation of any political importance have been illustrated by British talent, no writer has hitherto favoured the world with a regular and continuous history of the Arabs. This neglect seems the more extraordinary in an age so distinguished as the present for literary enterprise, and when so many valuable accessions have been recently made to our scanty knowledge of the Arabian peninsula in the journals of intelligent travellers and scientific expeditions. Considering the many great and diversified events which the subject embraces, and the feelings of romantic interest that still attach to the celebrated regions of gold and frankincense, there appears some reason for the complaint, that so little has been done to elucidate the character and actual condition of this ancient and renowned people, whose exploits once filled all Europe with astonishment; and that so much yet remains unknown of the sandy deserts they inhabit, and the singular institutions by which they are governed.

An attempt to supply this omission by connecting the records of the past with the illustrations of modern discovery, so as to exhibit the whole at one

view and within a moderate compass, is the object of the following volumes. In entering upon a field so ample,—unfolding in rapid succession a series of wars, revolutions, and vicissitudes of human fortune, without parallel in any age or country,—the author was not insensible of the numerous difficulties to be encountered. With what degree of success his labours have been attended remains for others to determine. At the same time it is gratifying to reflect, that at no former period could the task have been undertaken with so many facilities and advantages as at the present moment. The barriers of religious prejudice, which so long kept asunder the Christian and Mohammedan nations, are in a great measure broken down;—the shades of ignorance and romance which, in the infancy of navigation, brooded over the people and the productions of Arabia have been dispelled;—the character of the wandering Bedouin has been studied in his own deserts;—even the Holy Land of Islam has been trodden by the feet of unbelievers, and the uncircumcised stranger has mingled in the sacred ceremonies of the Kaaba. These circumstances, by bringing to light many new and important facts, have furnished the historian with a rich stock of materials which a few years ago no European writer possessed. Of these sources of information the author has not neglected to avail himself; and, while acknowledging his obligations to the distinguished travellers Niebuhr and Burckhardt, he ought also to state, that he has not omitted to consult the more recent surveys of Chesney, Head, and Owen.

In the earlier chapters of the Work, which refer to the dark and legendary times prior to the Mo-

hammedan era, the Author has endeavoured to give as clear and succinct an account of the primitive inhabitants, government, customs, and ancient commerce of the country, as the peculiar nature of his materials would admit. All historians and chronologists, who have studied this obscure era, have found themselves so bewildered with fable and tradition, or involved in such inextricable confusion from the want of authentic records, that they have been compelled either to rest satisfied with probable conjecture; or to abandon the subject in despair. That the Author has succeeded in verifying doubts or reconciling anachronisms, which perplexed the ablest Arabian antiquaries,—Pocock, Reiske, and De Sacy,—it would be presumption in him to assert. He has employed every means in his power, however, to discover the truth. For this purpose the Oriental writers,—Abulfeda, Tabiri, Masoudi, Hamza, Nuvairi, Abulfarage, and others who record the transactions of these remote ages,—have been carefully perused; nor have those incidental notices and allusions been overlooked which occur in the pages of the Greek and Roman classics.

The life and religion of Mohammed form a curious and important episode in Arabian history; as giving rise to one of the most wonderful revolutions that the world has ever beheld. In treating of these, it has been the object of the present writer to give a fair representation of both, without being swayed by any of those prejudices and apprehensions which have led some authors to speak of the character of that remarkable personage, and the institutions of which he was the founder, in a tone of such uncharitable rancour, as to bring into suspicion the

veracity of their statements. While shunning the bitter invectives of one class of biographers, he has avoided the panegyrical strain of others, who have endowed the Apostle of the Koran with all the miraculous qualities which Eastern credulity has gravely ascribed to him. Having no hypothesis to support, and considering it his province rather to narrate events than to speculate upon them, he has confined himself to a simple record of facts ; leaving his readers in general to draw their own conclusions.

The conquests of the Arabs, under the once-formidable name of Saracens, while promulgating the Koran at the point of the sword ; the vast dominions which they acquired ; and their surprising progress in the cultivation of learning ; are themes which have occupied innumerable pens. To have entered into a full detail of these splendid transactions, or described at length the various dynasties which were planted in the ample regions that lie between the shores of the Atlantic and the frontiers of China, would have been an unwarrantable departure from the plan of the present volumes, by encroaching on the history of countries unconnected with Arabia. In following the march of the victorious Moslem, from Spain and Morocco to the wilds of Tartary, the author has endeavoured to imitate the speed of the conquerors ; and in tracing the progress of Mohammedan grandeur, as it shifted from its original seat at Medina to richer lands, and until it crumbled down into a number of independent principalities, he has dwelt no longer on these foreign topics than seemed necessary to preserve the chain of narrative unbroken. In this department of his work he has been enabled, from the valuable labours

of Major Price, to rectify some errors, as well as to illustrate some points more fully than has been done by Ockley and Marigny, or even by the Arabian annalists Abulfeda and Elmacin.

When the vanquished nations in Asia, Africa, and Europe, after passing in succession across the scene of action, shook off the yoke of the caliphs, the stream of events which had overspread nearly half the globe necessarily contracts itself within the natural bounds of Arabia. In describing the government, character, manners, and institutions of the present inhabitants, the Author need hardly repeat how much he is indebted to the enterprising travellers already mentioned, as well as to others whose names are introduced in course of the Work. This part of the history he considers peculiarly interesting; because, while elucidating the customs and domestic habits of a singular race of people, it develops a state of society with which Europeans have hitherto been very imperfectly acquainted.

The Map which accompanies the Work, and the description of the different political divisions of Arabia in the Second Chapter, will be found much more full and accurate than any that have yet been laid before the British public. Besides the routes of the pilgrim-caravans as laid down by Burckhardt, and the Itinerary of Captain Sadlier who crossed the Desert from the Persian Gulf to the Red Sea, much topographical information respecting the interior has been obtained from the expedition of Mohammed Ali against the Wahabees. The Chart of Nejed, which was constructed to illustrate the campaigns of the Egyptian army, and the treatise of Jomard on the Central Geography of Arabia, appended to Men-

gin's History, have brought to light much that was entirely new, and corrected various errors with regard to the true position of several places, as well as in the statistics of certain provinces, which our geographers had either left totally blank, or strewn with towns and villages on no better authority than the reports of the natives. These improvements and discoveries have been carefully transferred to the prefixed map ; and their value will readily be appreciated, when compared with the common geographical delineations of the Arabian deserts.

The Chapter on Natural History, it may be proper to remark, is merely intended as a popular view of the subject. To the merit of a scientific treatise it does not aspire ; the purpose of the Author being chiefly to illustrate the manners and customs of the people, while describing the physical structure and natural productions of the country.

EDINBURGH, *July* 1833.

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ARABIA,

ANCIENT AND MODERN.

CHAPTER I.

Introductory View of Arabian History.

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To those who delight to study man in his pastoral simplicity, to moralize on the destiny of nations or the rise and fall of empires, the history of Arabia cannot fail to be attractive. From time immemorial it has been celebrated for its precious productions, and distinguished as the home of liberty and independence; the only land in all antiquity that never bowed to the yoke of a foreign conqueror.

It continues to be inhabited at this day by a race coeval with the first ages of mankind. Their manners still present that mixture of rude freedom and patriarchal simplicity which we find in the infancy of society, before art had taught men to restrain the sentiments of nature, or disguise the original features of their character. This extraordinary people have not only preserved inviolate the dominion of their deserts and their pastures ; they have also, with a singular tenacity, retained from age to age, and in spite of changes and revolutions, the vices and virtues, the habits and customs of their ancestors, without borrowing improvement from the progress of knowledge or their intercourse with other nations.

The physical aspect of this country is not less interesting than the peculiar character of its inhabitants. Covered with vast plains of barren sands, intersected by ranges of mountains and fertile valleys, it unites the extremes of sterility and abundance, and enjoys a variety of climate that gives it at once all the advantages of the torrid and the temperate regions. There smiling plenty is often found embosomed in the midst of desolation ; and the indigenous productions of climes, the most distant and different from each other, flourish there in equal perfection. These grand and distinctive features of Arabia have suffered little alteration from the lapse of time, or the contingencies of human events. Centuries have passed over it without leaving any changes but those produced by the hand of nature. It presents few of those moral vestiges of servile degradation, or those melancholy ruins of departed splendour, that abound in almost every other kingdom in the world. It has, indeed, remains of cities

and towns that tell us of a wealth and a population long since vanished ; but it has no monuments of art to be compared with the stupendous and imperishable architecture of Egypt, or the classic temples of Greece and Italy.

It possesses, however, scenery of another description, and associations that speak more home to our hearts and our affections than the proudest monuments reared by human labour : With its deserts and mountains are entwined some of our most ancient and hallowed recollections, as places memorable in Scripture-history, and consecrated in the eyes of all civilized nations by having witnessed the visible descent of the Divine Being, and some of the sublimest manifestations of his power. It was in Arabia that those wonderful transactions took place which immediately followed the exode of the Israelites from Egypt ; its waters were miraculously divided for their passage ; it was through its rocky defiles and barren sands that they journeyed for eight and thirty years, doing penance for their murmurings and rebellion, before they could be admitted into the Promised Land. The fleets of Solomon and Hiram frequented its seas, and traded in its markets ; importing thence the gold and the ivory of which we read in the chronicles of the times. Its traffic and its merchandise are renowned both in sacred and profane history ; and for many ages it continued to be the only connecting link of commercial intercourse between the nations of the East and the West.

The inspired writers have borrowed from its manners and its productions some of their finest allusions and most striking descriptions. They make

frequent reference to the tabernacles of Edom, the flocks of Kedar and Nebaioth, the incense of Sheba, and the treasures of Ophir. The bride in the Song of Songs draws her imagery from an Arab tent, when she speaks of her beauty as "dark but comely," and compares her tresses to the fine hair of the mountain-goat. The terrible denunciations of the prophets, and the sublime compositions of the Hebrew poets, are greatly indebted to the same source for many of their most pointed and impressive similitudes. Isaiah, in predicting the downfall of Babylon, "the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency," heightens the picture of its utter desolation by a single allusion to the habits of this pastoral people, "neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there." (Chap. xiii. 20). No one, in short, can be ignorant how many valuable illustrations the inspired penmen have derived from Arabia; and how much light may be thrown on different parts of the Sacred Scriptures, by an attentive observation of the customs and institutions of this and the neighbouring countries. "In order," says the learned Michaelis, "to understand properly the writings of the Old Testament, it is absolutely necessary to have an acquaintance with the natural history as well as the manners of the East; for in that volume we find nearly three hundred names of vegetables: there are many also drawn from the animal kingdom, and a great number which designate precious stones."* The remark of this great biblical scholar is corroborated by an observation

* Preface to his Questions addressed to the Danish Travellers.

of the intelligent Burckhardt to the same effect ; “ that the sacred historian of the Children of Israel will never be thoroughly understood, so long as we are not minutely acquainted with every thing relating to the Arabian Bedouins, and the countries in which they move and pasture.”*

But the principal feature in the history of Arabia consists in its being the birthplace of that extraordinary personage whose artful fanaticism gave a new religion to his country, and produced a revolution which, in its effects on the destinies of mankind, finds no parallel in any age ancient or modern. Prior to the era of their Prophet the Arabs seem not to have ventured much beyond their own deserts, nor to have made any figure as a great or enterprising people. Then, however, their history acquired a new interest, and their natural energies took a new direction. Esteemed hitherto of no repute by foreigners, except for their wealth ; and separated from all the world, not more by their peculiar mode of life than by a necessity consequent on their situation, we find them suddenly emerging from their national insignificance, and assuming all at once the lofty character of apostles and legislators to the rest of mankind. The sword or the Koran was the terrible alternative they offered to the choice of their enemies. Doubly stimulated, by a thirst for conquest and a zeal for making proselytes, they performed exploits which made their name the terror of the whole earth for many centuries, and have rendered it famous to all posterity.

Nothing, indeed, in the political annals of man-

* Life and Mem. of J. L. Burckhardt, p. lxxxiv.

kind presents a more extraordinary spectacle than the sudden and overwhelming revolution which, about the middle of the seventh century, sprung up in this obscure corner of the East. Originating in the bold but impious pretensions of one man, who had the art to concentrate the scattered and impetuous energies of his country into the channel of his own ambition, it spread with amazing celerity; and in less than a hundred years covered an extent of territory greater than was ever owned by Rome in the Augustan age of her power. All that we read of the fabled monarchies of Assyria and Babylon, of the boasted expeditions of Cyrus and Alexander, or the vast regions overrun by the Mogul and Tartar hordes, will bear no comparison to the dominion of Mohammed; for it embraced them all. Reaching from the Pillars of Hercules on the one hand to the confines of China on the other, it comprehended during a certain period three-fourths of Asia, the whole of Northern Africa, and a considerable portion of Europe.

It is true that the stability of this colossal power did not equal its greatness. Religious disputes, and the jarring interests of families or individuals who claimed an hereditary title to the succession, gave rise to discords and revolts that soon broke down this huge pontifical monarchy into a variety of separate and independent principalities. At a later epoch, too, foreign invasion completed that overthrow which intestine divisions had begun. The quarrels of rival caliphs were succeeded by wars and revolutions not less sanguinary than had marked the rise and establishment of their power. Greeks, Turks, and Tartars, numerous as the lo-

custs from their own deserts, poured in their wild and undisciplined swarms on all sides of the Moslem dominions, and in process of time won back the extensive territories which a warlike superstition had wrested from them. New states and kingdoms sprung from this imperial wreck, and gradually settled themselves over the fair and ample regions which the Saracen conquests had embraced. The power and magnificence of the caliphs shrunk back into the same obscurity from which they had risen. But while their temporal dominion was reduced to its ancient limits within the Seas of Arabia, the faith and the fame of Mohammed were left to enjoy all the ascendancy which his first triumphs had gained. The victorious nations who threw off the yoke of his feeble successors retained all their veneration for his religion, and willingly rendered him allegiance as their spiritual master ; and, at the present day, his creed reigns throughout the East with nearly as absolute and undisputed authority over the hearts and consciences of men as in the proudest era of Saracen despotism.

Short as was the career of this military pageant, which achieved such vast and extraordinary changes in the moral and political state of a large portion of the world, it is replete with events interesting to the statesman and the philosopher ; unfolding a series of characters and incidents that will both engage and reward our curiosity. The victories, revolutions, and capricious vicissitudes of human fortune that pass by in rapid succession, are without example in any nation of ancient or modern Europe. The catalogue of the leading personages, the caliphs and conquerors that figured on this remarkable theatre, presents some

strange contrasts to the ordinary history of successful adventurers, and the distribution of earthly grandeur. Among other nations, heroes and legislators generally require a process of training, and it is only by slow and persevering degrees that the usurper ascends the pinnacle of his ambition. Here we have the rare spectacle of slaves mounted on thrones ; lawless bandits becoming the dispensers of justice and protection ; illiterate shepherds and merchants suddenly transformed into the commanders of armies, or vested with the solemn functions of kings and pontiffs. Yet, singular as it may appear, not a few of them were distinguished for civil and military talents ; others have gained a lasting celebrity by their patronage and love of science ; and some of them shed a lustre on the diadem, by the exercise of those peaceful and princely virtues which have procured for the rulers of other countries the venerable title of Fathers of their people.

It was in the courts of Bagdad and Cufa, of Damascus and Cordova, that learning found a hospitable asylum, when a succession of barbarous inroads had nearly quenched the last rays of Greek and Roman literature, and scarcely left a single monument of art or genius in Europe. Nothing, except their own victories, is more surprising than the progress which this acute and ingenious people made in the cultivation of every department of human knowledge. From a state of ignorance and barbarism, in which they had been plunged for centuries, they emerged with a lustre not more remarkable for its brilliancy than for the gigantic height to which it rose. Nor can we account, except from the strength and versatility of their mental capacities, for this sudden blaze

of genius which burst forth in every corner of their empire, and spread its influence as far as their arms extended. Many of the caliphs were protectors of learning. They lived surrounded with poets and orators, and assembled in their palaces men of the most distinguished acquirements from every quarter of the world. The name of Haroun-al-Raschid, the hero of the *Thousand-and-one Nights*, stands associated with those enchanting fictions which have made Bagdad a fairy-land, and will continue to diffuse a charm until taste and imagination shall become extinct.

Under his successors, learning of all kinds was cultivated and propagated with equal zeal. In every town, from the banks of the Tigris to the Atlantic, schools and colleges were established. The sun of science and philosophy diffused its humanizing influence over the fierce spirits and savage manners of Africa. A chain of academies stretched along the whole Mediterranean shore ; and in the cities of Cairo, Fez, and Morocco, the most magnificent buildings were appropriated to public instruction.

Spain was one of the most celebrated seats of Arabian learning. A vast number of eminent names in poetry, medicine, mathematics, and every department of study, adorned its annals even in the dreary night of the twelfth century. In its schools and libraries the sacred fires of Oriental knowledge continued to burn with more than their ancient splendour, when the rest of the world was sunk in Gothic ignorance.

This ascendancy of the Arabs in the empire of letters had followed exactly the progress of their arms ; but, like their other conquests, it rested on an insecure

basis, and proved quite as transitory in its duration. It did not vanish, however, without leaving many important benefits to succeeding generations. Not only were the literary treasures of antiquity preserved, and transfused into the copious language of Arabia;—there were also imported new and useful discoveries in arts and manufactures, which had long enjoyed in the East a perfection then unknown to other nations. Every branch of study,—history, geography, criticism, the belles lettres, the natural and moral sciences,—received valuable accessions from the enterprise and enthusiasm of the Arabs. The number of comforts and even luxuries for which we are indebted to them is prodigious; but as they were introduced gradually and at a remote period, we continue to enjoy the benefit of them unconsciously, and without recognising their authors. Many arts and inventions, which have ministered to human happiness, and wrought a total change in the system of human knowledge, were first communicated and taught to us by these Eastern invaders; among whom they were well known long before any indications of them had reached the darkened shores of Europe.

In casting our eye with a rapid glance over the great and diversified events which offer themselves to our contemplation in the study of Arabian history, it is matter of surprise that, until of late, the attention of Europeans should have been so little excited towards this primitive and extraordinary race; and that so much yet remains to be explored of the country they inhabit, and the institutions by which they are governed. Distance; no doubt, and a rare intercourse, have contributed to blunt that curiosity which once looked with astonishment on the trophies

of their valour and their learning. New alliances have been formed with the Eastern World; and considerations of trade,—which has long since abandoned its ancient route,—have drawn away our sympathies from this romantic land.

The interest we take in remote or ancient nations depends greatly on the degree of intimacy with which their memory or their achievements are associated with our present habits. The preference is naturally given to those countries whose language and manners are familiar to us, and incorporated as it were with our ideas and institutions. It is from this circumstance that the Greeks and Romans have engrossed so large a portion of our study. Their authors are the guides and text-books of our education. From them, it may be said, we have borrowed the rudiments of our literature, our philosophy, our laws, and our civilisation.

With the Arabs the case stands very differently; and they might, not without reason, complain of an apathy which has allowed a veil of ignorance and prejudice so long to rest on their country and their true character. Their language forms no elementary part of our studies, and is seldom approached, except from motives of professional necessity, or a taste which is more admired for its singularity than its usefulness. No Eastern tongue, except the Chinese, is so little cultivated or understood in Europe as the Arabic, notwithstanding the efforts of translators and grammarians,—of Schultens, Reiske, Golius, Erpenius, De Sacy, D'Herbelot, Casiri, Asseman, Pocock, Gagnier, Ockley, Sale, Jones, Richardson, Price, and various others, who have contributed by their learned labours to clear a passage for

future adventurers into this vast treasury of Oriental knowledge.

There are certain impressions, too, with which Europeans have been wont to associate the character of this ancient and celebrated people, which have had an unfavourable effect, and attached a sort of stigma to their very name. We are accustomed to regard them in the light of robbers and pirates merely, "*whose hand is against every man ;*" whose primeval destiny was a sentence of implacable and ceaseless hostility with their neighbours ; and on whose fortunes there has rested, since the days of Abraham, the doom of a rejected and expatriated race. Religious prejudices have combined with the predictions of Scripture and the physical impediments of their country, to widen this gulf of ignorance between the Christian and the Mohammedan world.

When the bloody wars of the Koran had ceased, and the chivalry of France and Spain had delivered Europe from the terror of the Saracen arms, a new race of combatants appeared on the field. A host of doctors and schoolmen crowded the theological arena, and fought against the profaners of tombs and the oppressors of pilgrims with all the characteristic bitterness of their sect. Long after the defeat of the Crusaders had left these infidels in the undisputed possession of their mosques and their sepulchres, the ban of the church stood recorded against them ;* and the profoundest fathers in Christendom exercised their vast erudition in detecting and re-

* The Greek Church carried its excommunications so high as to pronounce, in their catechisms, *anathema* against the deity worshipped by the Mohammedans, whom they represented as a *solid* and *spherical* Being ; for so they translated the word, *Al-Samed*, applied in the Koran to the deity, and which signifies also *eternal*.

futing the "lies, perjuries, and blasphemies," of the Arabian Prophet; and predicting the final triumph of the Cross over the profane symbol of the Moslem heresy.* Kings and emperors entered the ranks of controversy, and bound themselves by solemn vows for their extirpation. Military orders were expressly instituted for the same object, who made it a work of charity and mercy to harass, and destroy them from the face of the earth. Towards

The Emperor Andronicus ordered this anathema to be erased from the ritual of the Greek Church, on account of the offence it gave to the Saracens who had embraced Christianity. But the Christian doctors opposed it most strenuously. After long and bitter disputes on the subject, the bishops assembled in council, and consented, though with the utmost reluctance, to transfer the imprecation in their catechisms from the "God of Mohammed" to the impostor himself, his doctrine, and his sect.—*Annales Nicetæ*, lib. vii. p. 113. *Reland de Reliq. Mohammed.* lib. ii. sect. 3.

* The titles of most of these erudite works vouch sufficiently for the spirit of their contents. The Cardinal Nicolas de Cusa, about the year 1460, produced his "Cribratio Alcorani," or Sifting of the Koran, as an antidote against the false religion that had made such disastrous inroads into the Papal dominions. In 1487, Joannes Andreas, a converted Mussulman, wrote in Spanish his "Confusion of the Mohammedan Sect," in refutation of the creed he had forsaken. So early as '210 Friar Richard had gone to Bagdad in order to confute the Mohammedans out of their own books; and, on his return, he published his "Confutatio Legis Saracenicæ." The Jesuit missionary Xavier, at the command of the Mogul emperor, wrote a defence of the Gospel against the Saracens, called "A Looking Glass for showing the Truth." A learned Persian wrote an answer to it, entitled the "Brusher of the Looking Glass," in which he exposed the errors and superstitions of the Church of Rome, so as to alarm the Propagandists, who employed a Franciscan friar to refute it; and, in 1628, he published his "Clearing up of the Looking Glass," in reply to the Persian Brusher. Among other defenders of Christianity who directed their polemical fury against the Saracens, may be mentioned Alphonso de Spina, who wrote the "Fortalitium Fidei," or Fortress of the Faith; Raymond Martin, with his "Pugio Fidei," or Dagger of the Faith; and Pelagius, with his "Collyrium contra Hereticos," or Eye-Salve against the Heretics. Some of these productions are poor enough, and give a curious picture of the extravagant fancies of the writers. Among the early specimens of English typography, we find a book printed by Daye, "Agaynst Perjurius Murderyng Mahumet."—*Watt's Biblioth. Brit. Prideaux's Life of Mahomet.*

the close of the Middle Ages their name was detested over all Europe, where they were known only as barbarians and freebooters, the burners of libraries, the Huns and Goths of the East, and the enemies of the Catholic faith.

The improvements and discoveries of navigation, which threw a new light on the most distant quarters of the globe, tended for a while rather to prolong than to dispel the shades of prejudice that had settled down on Arabia. When the naval enterprise of the Portuguese had, in 1497, opened up a new passage to India by the Cape of Good Hope, the genius of ancient commerce abandoned the shores of the Red Sea; and its altered course dissolved, in a great measure, the only remaining bond of connexion which had hitherto attracted the cupidity of strangers towards the fertile regions of gold and frankincense.

In process of time, however, these barriers, which ignorance and bigotry had reared, were gradually broken down. Literary men, both here and on the Continent, began to study the works of the Arabian authors; and to unlock, by means of their translations and commentaries, the sealed treasures of Oriental learning. Pocock, at Oxford, spent more than sixty years in this laudable toil.* Various foreign scholars trode in his footsteps with equal erudition; and to them the world is indebted as the first restorers of Arabian literature. Since their time numerous Societies have been instituted, for the pur-

* The elder Pocock (Edward) is a name of which English literature may well be proud. He studied in the East, and on his return was dismissed by his master with this compliment,—“Go thy way; wheresoever thou goest, thou knowest more Arabic than the Mufti of Aleppo.”—*Ockley's Hist. Pref.* vol. ii. p. xxviii.

pose of collecting and giving to the public such information respecting the East as may lie scattered among the hoarded stores of modern libraries ; or can be procured by the research of individuals who have visited or resided in the countries whose history, manners, and productions, it is their object to illustrate. Several Arabian works have recently appeared under the auspices of the College of Fort-William in India, and of the Oriental Translation Committee established in London. Within the last two or three years, a periodical work in their own language was projected in the capital of France, for the benefit of the Arabs, in order to make them acquainted with the literature and politics of Europe ; and to rekindle, as it were, the torch of knowledge in those neglected deserts where the arts and sciences drew their first breath.* The Committee of Public Instruction at Calcutta are daily occupied in translating into the Eastern tongues the most esteemed writings of modern authors, both English and Scottish.

Much was also done for the elucidation of Oriental history by the liberal and enlightened spirit of British commerce during the last century. At an early period the merchants trading to the Levant formed themselves into a company, which was acknowledged and protected by the government. Their powers were great, and their intercourse extensive, including the States of Barbary and all the shores of the Mediterranean eastward of Sicily. The benefits conferred by this Association in the way of research and illustration were immense ; and it is to their consuls, chaplains, and agents, many of whom were individuals of very distinguished ta-

* Asiatic Journal, vols. viii. and xxii.

lents, that we owe our best and earliest knowledge of the countries connected with their traffic.*

It is almost superfluous to remark, that several valuable additions to our stock of information have been made by the adventures of modern travellers. The journals of Niebuhr and Burckhardt alone, though there are many other useful narratives, have done more to illustrate the geography, manners, and customs of Arabia, than all that has been written since the revival of letters.† Its botany and zoology have been investigated, its ancient ruins examined, and its present condition described; so far at least as came within the range of their own observation, or could be gathered from their converse with the natives. The recent war with the Wahabees opened up new channels of discovery, by affording to several Europeans attached to the Egyptian army an opportunity of penetrating farther into the Arabian deserts than had been deemed prudent or practicable by solitary travellers. The survey which these expeditions enabled them to make has illustrated many curious and doubtful points, and brought us acquainted with extensive pastoral tracts little known, and almost totally unexplored by strangers; for the knowledge of which we had to depend on Arabian authors, often very incorrect; or on the Greeks and Romans, who described these immeasurable wilds, chiefly from fanciful and exaggerated reports.‡

* Among the agents of the Levant Company who have conferred obligations of this kind, we find the names of R. Pococke, Ricaut, Maundrell, Smith, Shaw, the two Russells, Porter, Dallaway, &c. — all intelligent travellers.

† Niebuhr, the Danish traveller, visited Arabia in 1763; Burckhardt in 1810—17; and Badhia, a Spanish Mussulman, under the name of Ali Bey, in 1807.

‡ The pen of Herodotus once celebrated this country, and might

The early pilgrims from Europe and Africa, who annually visited the grand temple at Mecca, had neither means nor leisure for observation; they performed their devotions, and, however enlightened as to their spiritual prospects, returned at least entirely ignorant of the country. The Crusaders met the Saracens only as enemies in the field of battle, where they found them enthusiastically brave, often generous in the hour of victory, and always faithful to the laws of honour and hospitality. The French and Portuguese, by their several expeditions to the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf in the 16th and 17th centuries, made geographers acquainted with little more than the coasts, on some parts of which they had effected temporary settlements.

It is but of late that feelings of ancient prejudice have ceased to haunt the imagination of European travellers. The Chevalier D'Arvieux, French consul in Syria from 1682 to 1688, visited the camp of an Arabian emir, and mentions his surprise at the polite civility of these Eastern savages, whom the people of France had been taught to consider as having nothing human about them but the shape; while the prince of the desert, and his courtiers, were equally astonished to find that the Franks, whose names they used to frighten their children, were not cannibals, nor quite so barbarous as had been represented.* Niebuhr and Burckhardt, who have earned such an honourable distinction in this interesting field of research, concur in their admission that the

have supplied many defects in its early history. But the work has long since perished in the wreck of classical learning; and the loss is the more to be regretted, when we reflect on what he has done for the antiquities of Egypt.

* *Voyages de l'Arabie Deserte*, Pub. par M. De la Roque.

pictures drawn of Arab ferocity, and the dangers to be apprehended from it, have been greatly overcharged ; and that travellers, when they meet with incivilities or injuries, have usually themselves to blame, either by affecting an ostentation of wealth and consequence, which acts as an incitement to plunder ; or by expecting such luxuries and conveniences as are utterly incompatible with the simple habits and resources of the country.

But with all this laudable and successful enterprise, the labour of Arabian discovery is far from being completed. There is yet scope for exertion. The prying eye of observation, which has made important disclosures in several of its unfrequented provinces, has left various central districts nearly unexplored, and as little known as they were in the days of Alexander the Great. There is, however, small reason to doubt but that this obscurity will gradually disappear. Though there are few allurements to tempt the literary adventurer, compared with the dangers he runs, and the necessary qualifications of mind and body ; still there is enough of scientific chivalry to carry forward, if not to complete the discoveries that have been so auspiciously begun. Persevering research has lifted up, or rather for ever removed, the veil that so long hid the mystic writings of ancient Egypt. A new interest has dawned on the ruins of her tombs and her temples. Those monuments of nameless kings and gods, instead of remaining the objects of barren admiration or blind enthusiasm, have been restored to history and chronology ; and those primitive fountains of learning to which Greece herself owed the rudiments of her knowledge, have again become the oracles of wisdom

to the Western World. It required indefatigable patience, and a multitude of fatal attempts, to trace the hidden sources of the Nile and the Niger. Similar perseverance may dispel the ignorance that covers the interior of Arabia ; and though it cannot make the wilderness and the solitary place to bud and blossom as the rose, it may restore to geography much that the wreck and the negligence of a thousand years have buried in oblivion.

The task can be approached now with many facilities that have sprung from the improvement of art, or grown up with the liberal and enlightened progress of society. The history of the terrible Saracens can be discussed with more candour and freedom than in the reigns of Omar and Saladin. A recital of their cruelties will find, in our day, no Peter the Hermit to make them a theme of declamation for rousing the pious zeal of kings and emperors ; or for letting loose a second time upon Asia the undisciplined fury of a superstitious multitude. Even their religion may be spoken of without reviving those apprehensions which alarmed the piety of Prideaux and the bigotry of Maracci. A fair representation of its doctrines will hardly expose us to the spiritual attacks of those *daggers* and *fortresses of the faith* with which the Christian doctors of yore were wont to assail their antagonists. The tolerant spirit of our age has effaced the prejudices against a difference of belief which ignorance and fanaticism had created. The sword—the grand argument of the Moslem religion—has yielded to the force of reason ; and our manners and habits of thinking have triumphed in their turn over the relentless soldiers of Mohammed.

The subject, embracing such a variety of events, is necessarily extensive. We shall endeavour to collect within a moderate compass every thing which, from its novelty or importance, deserves to be recorded ; and if our limits do not permit us to gather all the flowers that lie scattered over the surface of this pleasant landscape, we hope at least to be able to produce some of those treasures of solid information which, like gold mixed with sand or buried in mountains, have been alloyed with Eastern fable, or concealed from the general reader by being wrapt up in dead or foreign languages. We have thought it essential to our plan to give some account of the dark and traditionary epoch that preceded the time of Mohammed, in order to preserve a connected chain of narrative with the more brilliant and authentic events that followed it. Besides, it is impossible, without such aid, to understand either the literature or the religion of the Arabs. Their tales and their poetry abound with images, the origin of which must be sought beyond the memory of written records. Even the Koran itself has perpetual allusions, not only to the facts, but to the fables and traditions which the stream of antiquity had mingled and carried down in its course. What we shall say of the government, customs, and institutions of the ancient Arabs, shall be restricted to what is absolutely necessary to a right understanding of their civil and political history after they had risen to the dignity of a warlike and powerful empire.

CHAPTER II.

Description of Arabia.

Name—Boundaries—General Features—Ancient Geographical Divisions—Arabia Petraea—Deserta—Felix—Modern Divisions—Hejaz—Tehama—Yemen—Hadramaut—Oman—Lasha or El-Hassa—Nejed—Peninsula of Sinai—Ancient Bed of the Jordan—Mounts Sinai and Horeb—View from their Top—Various Opinions as to their Identity—Climate of Arabia—Heat—Rains—Rivers—Winds—The Simoom—Arabian Seas—Persian Gulf—Red Sea—Coral Banks—Passage of the Israelites—Dangerous Navigation—Steam Communication with India.

ARABIA is generally allowed to have derived its name from a Hebrew word, denoting a wilderness or land of deserts and plains. Various other derivations have been assigned; and learned etymologists are divided in opinion, whether the term be expressive of a mixed, a mercantile, or a western people. The Arabs themselves trace it to one of their ancestors, whom they call Yarab, a son of Joktan, who is said to have been one of the earliest settlers in that country; but as Yarab does not occur among the thirteen sons of that patriarch mentioned in Scripture (Gen. x. 26—29), this inference may be considered as purely traditional. The name of Arabah is repeatedly applied to the western wilderness by Moses, who describes it with a minuteness not to be mistaken, as situated “over

against the Red Sea, between Paran and Tophel ; and by the way of Elath and Ezion-gaber.”* A small tract in the ancient Idumæa still retains the original appellation ; and as these territories belonged to the wandering Ishmaelites, the name would gradually be extended as they spread their conquests over the rest of the country. By this name it is recorded in the writings of the Jewish historians and the later prophets, who speak of the kings of Arabah, of its traffic, and the different tribes by which it was inhabited. (Josh. xv. 52, 61 ; 1 Kings, x. 15 ; Jer. xxv. 24.)

At this remote period were these western regions distinguished from the more fertile and populous plains towards Chaldea, which went by the name of Kedom or the East,—a distinction as old as the days of Abraham and Job. This simple practice of deriving names from territorial residence is entirely in accordance with the notions that regulated the primitive divisions of the earth, when mankind had no other geography than such as respected their own local situation, or the relative position of the heavens. The ancient Greeks called Italy Hesperia, or the Land of the West ; the Italians bestowed the same epithet on Spain ; and the name was at length transferred to those fabulous gardens, which gradually retired before the dawn of knowledge into the Elysian solitudes of the Atlantic Ocean. Similar ideas prevail in the East at the present day. Syria is uniformly called Sham,—the country to the

* The word translated *plain* (Deut. i. 1, and ii. 8,) is in the original *Arabah*, by the Red Sea, &c. “ Arabia non ab Arabo, Apollinis et Babyloniar filio, ut Latinorum plerique asserunt, sed ab Araba, plagâ non longe a Medina sita, nomen sortita est.”—Gab. Sionita, de Mor. et Nat. Orient. p. 7. Univ. Hist. vol. xviii. chap. 21. Gagnier, ad Abulfed. Geog. Diatrib. de Arab. nom. sect. i.

left, or the north ; while the south is termed Yemen, or the country to the right. The Turks and Persians call the whole peninsula Arabistan ; the natives themselves call it Jezirat el Arab (the peninsula of the Arabs) ; and it is remarkable as one of the few countries among the kingdoms of antiquity which, amidst the changes and revolutions of 3000 years, still retains the precise appellation which it bore within a few centuries of the Deluge.

This vast tract lies between latitude $12^{\circ} 45'$ — $34\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ north, and longitude $32\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ — 60° east from Greenwich. Its form is that of an irregular triangle, surrounded on three sides by water. Eastward, its limit is the Persian Gulf and the Euphrates ; on the south lies the Indian Ocean ; on the west the Red Sea divides it from Egypt, Nubia, and Abyssinia. The northern frontier is not so well defined, and has been subject to considerable variations. The ancients restricted it to an imaginary line, stretching between the extreme points of the Arabian and Persian Gulfs. The rest they attached partly to Egypt and partly to Syria. But the conquests and settlements of the Arabs have long extended their territory beyond this ideal boundary. On the authority of Burekhardt, the northern frontier may be taken as a line running from Suez across the isthmus of that name to the Mediterranean, near El Arish, passing along the borders of Palestine and the Dead Sea, and thence winding through the Syrian desert by Palmyra until it reaches the Euphrates above Anah, the course of which river it follows till joined by the Tigris ; at which point their united streams take the name of Shut el Arab, or boundary of Arabia. Part of the northern frontier lies now within

the pashalic of Damascus, which extends as far south as Tor Hesma, a high mountain, one day's journey from Akaba.

The Greek and Roman geographers prescribed a limit somewhat different. Xenophon carries it beyond the Euphrates, including the greater part of Mesopotamia or the Arabian Irak; Ptolemy bounds it by the Chaldean Mountains on this side the river, and northward by the city of Thapsacus, near Racca. The same is adopted with little variation by Diodorus and Strabo. Abulfeda, an Arabian geographer who wrote about the beginning of the fourteenth century, extending the northern boundary somewhat higher than Burckhardt, places it at Beles, nearly in the latitude of Aleppo. The length of this extensive region, from Anah to the Strait of Bab el Mandeb, is reckoned about 1480 miles; and its middle breadth, from Suez to Bussora, above 900. On the south, it presents a base of 1200 miles washed by the Indian Ocean.

In its general features Arabia may be described as an elevated table-land, sloping gently towards the Persian Gulf. The whole of the southern coast is a wall of naked rocks, as dismal and barren as can well be conceived. Here and there they embosom a low sandy beach, but they are entirely destitute of soil or herbage, offering to the eye of the mariner a striking picture of ruin and desolation. The mountains, brown and bare, rise in several ranges, one behind another, to the height of 1000 or 1500 feet. Such is the impenetrable rampart, dark, waste, and wild, with which nature has guarded the fabled land of "Araby the Blest." On every other side this peninsula is encircled with a belt of flat,

dry, sandy ground ; that on the north is composed of the Hauran (Auranitis) or Syrian Desert ; that on the east, of the level shores of the Persian Gulf.

The interior of the country is chiefly burning deserts, lying under a sky almost perpetually without clouds, and stretching into immense and boundless plains, where the eye meets nothing but the uniform horizon of a wild and dreary waste. Over the face of this vast solitude the sand sweeps along in dry billows, or is whirled into hills and columns, having the appearance of waterspouts, and towering to a prodigious height. When the winds leave them at rest, they resemble the ocean ; and their level expanse, at a small distance, is sometimes mistaken by the thirsty traveller for a collection of waters. This deception recedes as he journeys on, keeping always in advance ; whilst the intermediate space glows like a furnace, occasioned by the quivering undulating motion of that quick succession of vapours and exhalations which are extracted by the solar rays. Every object is magnified to the eye, insomuch that a shrub has the appearance of a tree, and a flock of birds might be mistaken for a caravan of camels. The most singular quality of this vapour (Sirab), or mirage as it is termed, is its power of reflection,—objects are seen as from the surface of a lake, and their figure is sometimes changed into the most fantastic shapes.

These naked deserts are encircled, or sometimes intersected by barren mountains, which run in almost continuous ridges, and in different directions, from the borders of Palestine to the shores of the Indian Ocean. Their summits tower up into rugged and insulated peaks, but their flinty bosoms sup-

ply no humidity to nourish the soil ; they concentrate no clouds to screen the parched earth from the withering influence of a tropical sky. The refreshment of cooling breezes, periodically enjoyed in other sultry climates, is here unknown. The air is dry and suffocating. Hot and pestilential winds frequently diffuse their noxious breath, alike fatal to animal and vegetable life. The steppes of Russia and the wilds of Tartary are decked by the hand of nature with lofty trees and luxuriant herbage ; but in the Arabian deserts vegetation is nearly extinct. The sandy plains give birth to a straggling and hardy brushwood ; while the tamarisk and the acacia strike their roots into the clefts of the rocks, and draw a precarious nourishment from the nightly dews. An inspired pen has truly described this sterile country as “ a land of deserts, and of pits ; a land of drought, and of the shadow of death ; a land that no man passed through.” (Jer. ii. 6.)

This general aspect of desolation is occasionally relieved by verdant spots, or valleys with little streamlets, lying among the hills, and formed by the alluvial depositions of the winter showers. These wadys (the oases of the Greeks), which appear like islands in the trackless ocean, are both fertile and pleasant. Their rich verdure and groves of date-trees supply food and pasture for the roving colonies of the wilderness. There are, besides, various wells or watering stations, partly natural partly artificial, on the routes which traverse the deserts in several directions ; serving as points of intercourse between distant parts of the country. Without these reservoirs the greater portion of Arabia must have remained unpeopled, and for ever impervious to man.

Their brackish waters afford refreshment for the weary pilgrims, and enable small hordes of settlers to cultivate patches of ground, on which scanty crops or a few common vegetables are reared. These tanks or reservoirs are often built of stone, and form the usual resting-places of travellers and caravans: the water is raised in leathern buckets by means of an iron chain passed over a pulley, and drawn by cows or oxen. It is sold to strangers on their journey, and is often transported to a considerable distance on the backs of camels. Among the Arabs, water constitutes a great part of their wealth. It is the most valuable property in districts of fifty or a hundred miles round. The possession of a spring has occasioned hot disputes, and even been the cause of civil wars. We read of Abraham rebuking Abimelech because of a well which his servants had violently taken away; and of the strife between the herdsmen of Gerar and those of Isaac. It is also mentioned as an instance of intolerable tyranny in one of the ancient Arab kings, that he would suffer no camels but his own to be watered at the same place. There are entire districts, however, where this luxury, as it may well be called, is unknown. The great southern desert, which extends from six to seven hundred miles in length, and as much in breadth, does not possess a single fountain of water.

From the singular local situation of Arabia, the inequalities in the nature of its soil and climate may readily be inferred. Though the central portion consists of arid and burning wastes, the aspect of the country in other parts is materially different. In the south, more especially where the land is broken into hills and valleys, there are tracts of re-

markable fertility, which enjoy a succession of almost perpetual verdure. So short is the interval between the decay and reproduction of vegetable life, that the change is scarcely perceptible. Though nature perhaps nowhere realizes those splendid landscapes which borrowed their colouring from fancy rather than truth, and converted this happy region, in the minds of foreigners at least, into an earthly paradise, still the picture offers an agreeable contrast to the contemplation of dreary sands and desolate rocks. The air is more temperate, while the rains and dews descend more copiously. The hills are wooded to the tops, or covered with a rich alpine turf. From their sides fall perennial streams, sometimes in beautiful cascades, which run a course of considerable extent among cultivated fields or luxuriant gardens. Fruits of all kinds are delicious and abundant. The fertility of the earth at once invites and rewards the industry of the husbandman; and nature, by lavishing her choicest favours here, seems to have compensated for her want of hospitality every where else. What Waller says in his *Summer Island* is true of these delightful regions:—

“The gentle spring, that but salutes us here,
Inhabits there, and courts them all the year.”

Such is a general outline of what may be termed the physiology of this celebrated peninsula.

The political divisions of Arabia are differently represented by different writers. The knowledge which the ancients had of the country was imperfect, and little reliance can be placed on their descriptions. They scattered mountains, cities, and rivers, over its surface at random; chiefly, it would seem, to fill up a void in their maps, and to pre-

serve a kind of symmetry or analogy between this and the other portions of the earth with which they were better acquainted. Even D'Anville's accustomed accuracy is here at fault; and travellers have frequently borrowed from others what they had not the means to verify by actual survey. Within the last quarter of a century the torch of war has thrown a new light on many parts of the desert which might have still remained unexplored, had not these regions become the theatre of hostilities with a foreign enemy. The Turkish geographers divide Arabia into twelve provinces, while others limit them to two. The division most familiar to us is that introduced by Ptolemy, viz. the Stony, the Desert, and the Happy Arabia; a distinction which is applicable to the general features of the country rather than descriptive of separate provinces. The Greeks, it is well known, took great liberties with countries of which they had little acquaintance; but here they ought not to be accused of imposing arbitrary names, since they merely translated words which have a similar import in the original, and had been used by the natives themselves.

PETRÆA, or the Stony Arabia, occupied the mountainous tract between Palestine and the Red Sea. It was the country allotted to Esau or Edom, from whom it took the name of Idumæa. It was the land of the Amalekites, Midianites, Hittites, Hivites, Kedarenes, Hagarenes, Nabathæans, and other tribes descended from Abraham, so often mentioned in the wars of the Jews, under Moses, Joshua, and David. To this wild but interesting region belongs a reverence which no other portion of the earth, Judæa excepted, can claim. It

was the theatre of many awful and extraordinary events recorded in Jewish history. The sacred eminence of Sinai, on whose cloudy summit the Deity made his pavilion of darkness when he first issued a system of written laws to the human race—Horeb, with its burning bush, and its caves that gave shelter to Elijah when he fled from the persecution of Jezebel—the pastoral solitudes where the Jewish deliverer, then an exile from Egypt, kept the flocks of Jethro, the priest of Midian—Shur and Paran, with the bitter wells of Marah, and the smitten rock that yielded water—the land of Uz, the scene of the wealth and the woes of Job, of the trial of his patience and the triumph of his piety—are all comprehended within the geography of Petra.

ARABIA DESERTA extended north and east as far as the Euphrates. It was separated from Petra by the ridge of Mount Seir, and understood to comprehend the great central wilderness ; but its limits were vague and obscure.

ARABIA FELIX embraced the celebrated Region of Incense on the coast of the Indian Ocean. The ancients have dwelt with all the extravagance of romance on the costliness of its productions, and the wealth and number of its inhabitants. Marcian informs us, that in his time it contained fifty-four provinces, one hundred and sixty-four towns and villages, fifteen ridges of hills, four considerable rivers, five bays, two seacoasts, with thirty-five adjacent islands.* Strabo states that it was divided into five kingdoms, and that its chief cities abounded in tem-

* Arrlan, Marcian, Agatharcides, Dionysius Periegetes, &c. may be consulted in Hudson's *Geograph. Minor.* See also Dr Vincent's learned *Disquisitions on the Periplus of the Erythræan Sea.*

ples and palaces.* The principal nations mentioned by Pliny, Ptolemy, and the ancient geographers, as settled here, were the Minæi, Sabæi, Atramitæ, Catabeni, Maronitæ, Homeritæ, Sapphoritæ, Omanitæ, and a variety of others whose names and localities it is almost impossible to identify with any modern tribes or provinces in Arabia. Dionysius Periegetes, who wrote a description of the world in Greek verse, has celebrated this thuriferous region of the “lovely Arabia” (Ἀρῶαλις ἑρατεινῆς), where the fields were decked with undying verdure, and the atmosphere loaded with spicy odours. Of the forty-two cities mentioned by Abulfeda, and the six hundred by Ptolemy, the most ancient and populous were situated in Arabia Felix. The imagination of the Greeks, easily set on fire, pictured in golden dreams the ideal wealth of this Arabian Tempe; but it is evident that foreign nations knew little more of the country than its name, and that it abounded in gold, gems, spices, perfumes, with other natural rarities, the value of which was greatly enhanced by their own ignorance and cupidity.

The three divisions introduced by Ptolemy, and still adopted in modern geography, are unknown to the Arabs themselves; who, like the Egyptians, Turks, and Persians, would find it difficult to recognise their own names in the tongues of Europe. From time immemorial, this peninsula has been parcelled out into various independent territories; but as it never, properly speaking, has formed one kingdom, the number or limits of these provinces

* Strabo, Geog. lib. xvi. Pliny (Nat. Hist. lib. vi.) says, that Charmæi, a town of the Minæi, was fourteen miles in compass; that a city of the Agarturi was twenty miles about; and that Sabotale the capital of the Atramitæ, had sixty temples within its walls.

have not been very exactly defined. Regions are sometimes divided from each other by a solitary shrub, and the extent of hereditary property determined by the distance at which a dog can be heard to bark. The grand geographical divisions laid down by Niebuhr, and more minutely described by subsequent travellers, are eight ; though considerable tracts of country are not strictly or politically included in these territorial departments.

HEJAZ, the Holy Land of the Moslems, lies on the middle coast of the Red Sea ; its chief city, Mecca (the Macoraba of the Greeks), being the capital of the Mohammedan religion. It is a barren district, consisting of sandy plains towards the shore and rocky hills in the interior ; and so destitute of provisions, as to depend even for the necessities of life on the supplies of other countries. Among its fertile spots is Wady Fatima, which is well watered, and produces grain and vegetables. Safra abounds in date-trees. Taïf, seventy-two miles from Mecca, is celebrated for its gardens ; and the neighbourhood of Mediñá has cultivated fields. The towns on the coast are Jidda and Yembo ; the former being considered the port of Mecca, from which it is distant about fifty-five miles ; and the latter that of Medina. Hejaz is bounded eastward by a lofty range of mountains, which, near Taïf, take the name of Gebel Kora. The scenery there is occasionally beautiful and picturesque ; the small rivulets that descend from the rocks afford nourishment to the plains below, which are clothed with verdure and shady trees. The vicinity of Mecca is bleak and bare ; for several miles it is surrounded with thousands of hills, all nearly of one height ; their dark and naked peaks rise one

behind another, appearing at a distance like cocks of hay. The most celebrated of these are Safa, Arafat, and Meroua, which have always been connected with the religious rites of the Mohammedan pilgrimage. The whole of this territory may be considered as almost an absolute desert; D'Anville assigns it an extent of coast of about 750 miles.

TEHAMA is the flat sandy belt that extends along the Red Sea, nearly from Akaba to Aden; though it is chiefly restricted to the maritime plains southward of Hejaz. It stretches backwards to the mountains, varying in breadth from thirty to eighty miles. It bears every mark of having been anciently a part of the bed of the sea, from which it has gradually emerged. The soil is interspersed with marine fossils and other exuviae, and contains large strata of salt, which in some places shoot up into hills. As the sea continues to recede, the Tehama extends its limits in proportion. The coral banks gradually increasing, and the intermediate space being filled with accumulating sands, new ground is thus formed, and annexed to the continent. But this conquest over the watery element is of little advantage to man, as the land is altogether unsuceptible of cultivation. Tehama is by some included in the two adjoining provinces, and therefore not reckoned a separate territory. Between it and Hejaz lies the large district of Abu-Arish.

YEMEN corresponds nearly to the ancient Arabia Felix, and still comprehends the finest and most fertile portion of the peninsula. Hali, on the Red Sea, divides it from Hejaz. It presents considerable diversity of soil and climate; towards the coasts it is scorched and barren, but the interior is

a highland country, full of precipitous yet fertile hills, and enjoying a healthy and temperate air. Its extent is reckoned at 20,000 square miles. It is parcelled out, in unequal portions, into a great number of petty sovereignties, of which Niebuhr has enumerated fourteen; the principal being Aden, Kaukeban, Khaulan (supposed to be the Havilah of Scripture), Sahan, Nejeran, Kahtan, Heschid-ubekil, Jof or Mareb, and Jafa. Some of these are subdivided into three or four minor states, which are often ruled by independent princes. Sanaa, Mocha, Loheia, Taas, Hodeida, Zebid, and Damar, are the chief towns; all of which have been visited by European travellers.

HADRAMAUT (the Hazarmaveth of Scripture, Gen. x. 26) lies eastward of Yemen, which it greatly resembles in its soil and surface. The hills are extremely fertile, and intersected with well-watered vales. Its towns were more celebrated, and perhaps better known, in the time of Strabo and Ptolemy, than they are at present. It was famous in the days of Augustus for the bravery of its inhabitants, and still more for being the country whose mountains produced frankincense. This extensive province was included in Arabia Felix; its harbours are Keshin, Merbat, Dafar, and Hasec in the great gulf of Kuria Muria, which is surrounded with isles. Doan and Aidan, are towns in the interior; but of their situation we have no accurate knowledge. Shibam, which seems to be the Saba of the ancients, is described as the seat of a powerful prince, eight days' journey from Sanaa, and ten from Mareb. Niebuhr heard more than twenty cities mentioned, of which he could learn nothing beyond the names; but these, he ob-

serves, bore a striking resemblance to those recorded by the most ancient historians—a circumstance which renders it probable that this region has undergone little change since the remotest ages. The mountainous tracts called Seger (or Sahar) and Mahrah, are comprehended in this province.*

OMAN occupies the eastern angle of the peninsula between Hadramaut and the mouth of the Persian Gulf. It is filled with mountains, which almost everywhere extend to the sea. Muscat (the Mosca of Arrian) is the capital, and the best known to Europeans of all the Arabian cities on the Indian Ocean. The whole coast in this quarter exhibits the same bleak and sterile aspect already noticed;—presenting, in many places, a precipitous rocky wall towards the sea, alongside of which ships might float in safety. The name of Oman implies a land of peace or security, as contrasted with the uncivilized and inhospitable countries by which it is bounded. It is said to extend from near Cape Mussendom, on the north-west, to the island of Mazeira, south of Ras el Hud, which is literally the “Land’s End” of Arabia. Its breadth is reckoned six days’ journey towards the south-west. Throughout this space are scattered towns, villages, and hamlets, in great abundance. The mountains are in general rugged and bare, but very lofty. Hence the dews and clouds which they arrest give a mild and agreeable temperature to the air; while the showers, washing down the decomposed surface of the earth, add to the soil of the valleys, and also occasion rills and torrents to fertilize them. The people, from their situation on the Persian Gulf, have been celebrated from the ear-

* Niebuhr, *Descript. Arab.* tom. iii. pp. 160—254.

liest dawn of commerce. Their character, and the different positions on their coast, are described with considerable minuteness in the ancient Periplus of the Erythræan Sea. Northward of Cape Mussendom lie the territories of Seher and Julfar ; neither of which are properly included in the province of Oman.

LAHSA, or more properly EL HASSA, stretches along the Persian Gulf as far as the mouth of the Euphrates. This district is also denominated Hajar, and sometimes Bahrein ; but the latter appellation is now restricted to the islands of that name in the adjacent gulf. The coast is flat and dreary, diversified here and there with groves of palm-trees, that indicate the site of towns or villages, of which the number contained in the province is reckoned twenty. Its breadth inland is only fifty or sixty miles. It is celebrated for its numerous wells, some of which are covered over with vaulted roofs, supported by tall white marble columns, seen at a great distance. Rich clover pastures abound, which supply food to a fine breed of Arabian horses. The rivulets are fringed with lilies and privets ; but the country suffers fearful encroachments from the drifting sands, by which whole cantons are sometimes invaded. The principal town is El Hassa, a place of some note as one of the strongholds of the Arabs in their late wars with the pashas of Egypt and Bagdad. Another considerable town is Koneit or Graen, said to contain 10,000 inhabitants. El Katif is supposed to be the ancient Gherra, which was a famous *entrepôt* for the spices and perfumes of the south. Taroot, a small town to the east of El Katif, has excellent vineyards, which are sometimes flooded by the tides. It is here we must place the Regio Ma-

cina of the Greek geographers, where the vines, raised in earthen pots or baskets of rushes, were subject to be carried off by the waters of the sea.* The inland boundaries of these maritime provinces are far from being accurately defined. Nature, however, has set limits to them in the immense central desert of Southern Arabia, called Akhaf, which extends from the mountains behind Tehama to the frontiers of Oman, and is perhaps one of the most dreary regions on the face of the earth. The Arabs give it the name of Roba el Khali, or the "Empty Abode."† This vast expanse of sand contains nearly 50,000 square miles, and has no supply of water except from the clouds. The skirts of this frightful wilderness produce herbage when refreshed by the winter rains; but its depths have never been explored. One single station, the Wady Jebrin, on the route to Hadramaut, diversifies this solitary tract: it has wells and date-trees, but its noxious climate renders it unfit for habitation.

NEJED is the largest province in Arabia, occupying the great central desert (the Arabia Deserta), from Hejaz on the west, to the narrow strip of El Hassa on the east. Until within the last twenty-five years it was nearly a blank in the maps of Europe; or filled with names at random, according to the recital of travellers who had never visited it. Its breadth, according to Captain Sadlier, who traversed the whole peninsula from sea to sea in 1819, cannot be less than 750 miles. According to Jomard,

* Strabo, lib. xvi. p. 528.

† Burckhardt's Travels in Arabia, Appendix, No. iv. According to the tradition of the Arabs, this desolate region was once a terrestrial paradise, where dwelt a race of giants, who, for their impiety, were swallowed up by a deluge of sand.

the distance between the two gulfs, in a straight line from El Katif to Yembo, may be estimated at 270 leagues; the extent of the Nejed, from north to south, he reckons at 260.* The surface is diversified with mountains and plains; but it is by no means that barren and desolate region which it has been hitherto represented. On the north, from the Hauran to the banks of the Euphrates, the whole tract is one immense level called El Hamad, without the slightest elevation, and showing no trace of town or village; but affording vigorous growth to a few thorny shrubs, by which the traveller's eye is sometimes relieved. Xenophon's description of these regions, which were successively trodden by the armies of Cyrus and Julian, is as applicable at the present day as it was nearly 2300 years ago. "The country," says the Greek historian, "was a plain throughout, as flat as the sea, and full of wormwood; and if any other shrubs or reeds grew there, they had all an aromatic smell; but no trees could be seen. Bustards, ostriches, antelopes, and wild asses, appeared to be the only inhabitants."† Southwards, is the desert of Akhaf; so that Nejed is surrounded on every side by immense sandy plains. Many parts in the interior are well watered, and celebrated for their excellent pastures. There are also many remains of ancient buildings, of very massive struc-

* Memoirs of the Lit. Soc. of Bombay, tom. iii. Notice Géographique, par M. Jomard, Mengin, vol. ii. Appendix.

† 'Εν τούτῳ δὲ τῷ τόπῳ ἦν μὲν ἡ γῆ πιδίον, ἅπαν ὁμαλὸν ὥσπερ θάλαττα, ἀψινθίου δὲ πλήρες· εἰ δὲ τι καὶ ἄλλο ἐνὴν ὕλης ἢ καλάμου, ἅπαντα ἦσαν εὐώδη, ὥσπερ ἀρώματα· δένδρον δ' οὐδὲν ἐνὴν — *Xenoph. Anab. lib. i. cap. 22.*—*Gibb. Rom. Hist., chap. xxiv.*—British officers still find the same species of game that amused the soldiers of Cyrus.—*Keppel's Narrative*, vol. i. chap. v. *Sadlier's Itiner.*

ture and large dimensions, but in a state of complete ruin. Innumerable wadys are embosomed in the hills, which abound in fruits and grain of the finest quality. Yet the occasional want of rain causes frequent scarcities, which happen every three or four years, and are generally accompanied with epidemical disease. The country of Nejed is subdivided, according to Mengin, into twelve or fourteen smaller provinces, among which some include El Hassa.

Ared.	Haryk.	Dowaser.
Woshem.	Kharaj.	Soubeah.
Soudeir.	Gebel.	Aflaj.
Kasym.	Shahran.	Beishe.

Ared contains the capital city, Deraiah; but it is not so populous as Beishe, nor so fertile as Kasym, which is the richest province in Nejed. Kharaj is the same as the district of Yemama, and its chief town is still called by that name. The most remarkable mountains in Nejed are, Shammar, Khora, Salma, Shahak, and Toweik. Shammar stands near the great route from Damascus, and is, properly speaking, a district by itself. It rises behind a sandy desert, and is covered with forests and villages. In height and extent it resembles Mount Lebanon, and is seen by the pilgrims at a great distance. Above a hundred towns and villages have been enumerated in this extensive region; but this amount is probably much underrated, as there are large tracts still unexplored by Europeans. What has been done, however, towards the elucidation of this province, by the industry of Burckhardt, De Sacy, Jomard, and Mengin, is enough to enlighten the ignorance of Pinkerton, who confounded Yemama with Yemen, and thought that Nejed (which signifies the Highlands, as distinguished from Tehama or the Lowlands)

was so named from a mountain, and might be regarded as unknown to European geography.

The PENINSULA OF SINAI may be considered a province of Arabia, though not reckoned one of its political divisions. No part of that country has been so minutely explored, or so elaborately described as this interesting region. Its general aspect is singularly wild, and well merited the name of *Petræa*. A recent traveller describes it as "a sea of desolation. It would seem," says he, "as if Arabia *Petræa* had once been an ocean of lava, and that, while its waves were literally running mountains high, it was commanded suddenly to stand still."* The whole of this wilderness is a collection of naked rocks and craggy precipices, interspersed with narrow defiles and sandy valleys, which are seldom refreshed with rain or adorned with vegetation. Fountains or springs of water are extremely rare; and those that do exist are either brackish or sulphurous, but of a wholesome quality. Some of the plains are covered with loose flints and pebbles. Few shrubs or plants are to be met with, and those that are found are indebted to the clefts of some barren rock, or a thin mixture of clay in the soil, for their support. The ridge of mountains, called *Seir* and *Hor* in Scripture, stretches from the borders of the Dead Sea towards *Ailah*. On the western side runs the long valley *Wady Ghor* and *Wady Arabah*, from three to twelve miles in breadth; this, without doubt, formed the ancient bed of the Jordan, which must have emptied itself into the Arabian

* Sir Frederick Henniker's *Notes on Egypt*, &c. See also Burckhardt's *Travels in Syria*, Pococke's *Description of the East*, Shaw's *Travels*, Fazakerley's *Journey to Sinai* in Walpole's *Travels*, &c.

Gulf before the terrible overthrow of the Cities of the Plain arrested its waters in the pitchy lake of Sodom and Gomorrah. On the eastern side is Wady Mousa, the site of the ancient Petra, which gave its name to the district. Mount Hor is the highest of the chain, on the summit of which is pointed out the tomb of Aaron (Num., xx. 28), still held in great veneration by the Arabs.

Near the centre of the peninsula stands the group of the Sinai Mountains, the upper region of which forms an irregular circle of thirty or forty miles in diameter. It is difficult to imagine a scene more desolate and terrific than that which is discovered from the top of Sinai. Nothing is to be seen but huge peaks and crags of naked granite ; composing, as far as the eye can reach, a wilderness of steep and shaggy rocks, and valleys destitute of verdure. Yet in the highest parts of these regions water is to be found, and fertile spots which produce fruit-trees. This sacred mountain consists of two elevations, Gebel Mousa and Gebel Katerin, which are generally identified with Sinai and Horeb. Both terminate in a sharp peak, the planes of which do not exceed fifty or sixty paces in circumference. The latter is the higher of the two, and its summit commands a very extensive prospect of the adjacent country,—the two arms of the Red Sea, a part of Egypt, and northward to within a few days' journey of Jerusalem. There is some doubt, however, as to which of these the appellation is to be assigned ; some conjecturing that the lower eminence is Sinai, while others are of a contrary belief.

This confusion has arisen from the circumstance that the several names have been indiscriminately ap-

plied to this mountain. The manner in which Moses uses them, as convertible terms, has led to the supposition that the two must be twin summits of the same hill ; an opinion for which there does not appear to be any solid foundation, since Horeb may be interpreted, and seems to have been used, as the name of a rocky district or desert country, rather than the proper name of any particular eminence. The language of Scripture would lead us to suppose that Sinai was a detached mountain in the midst of a plain, and that the Israelites encamped around it. Its immediate vicinity afforded pasturage for their cattle, otherwise it would have been impossible for them to have remained so long in that quarter ; and its name suggests that it abounded in some species of acacia. Josephus describes it as an extremely pleasant place, and the discontented Israelites sojourned here twelve months without murmuring. These incidents certainly do not well correspond with the sterile neighbourhood of Gebel Mousa. " It is not easy to comprehend," says Niebuhr, " how such a multitude as accompanied Moses out of Egypt could encamp in these narrow gullies, and frightful and precipitous rocks ; but perhaps there are plains that we know not of on the other side of the mountain." There are valleys, however, at no great distance, where their flocks might find pasture ; and Shaw speaks of " a beautiful plain more than a league in breadth, and three in length, closed to the southward by some of the lower eminences of Sinai. In this direction, likewise (he adds), the higher parts of it make such encroachments upon the plain, that they divide it into two, each of them capacious enough to receive the whole encampment

of the Israelites." Some travellers have observed, that were this the real Sinai, it would be found to exhibit traces of the stupendous phenomena which attended the manifestation of the Divine presence, in the visible symbols of fire, and earthquake, and apparent volcanic eruption. Burckhardt, however, could not detect the slightest vestige of these supernatural appearances, though there are islands in the Red Sea which retain marks of volcanic action. But objections such as these are entitled to little weight. We do not read of any actual discharge from the mountain. It is described, indeed, as having "quaked greatly," as having "burned with fire," and emitted smoke "like a furnace:" but these appearances were not the effect of any natural convulsion; they were the awful emblems which the Deity chose to make the harbingers of his presence,—the cloudy robes of his divine majesty. To look, therefore, for the ordinary results of such phenomena in the site of this wonderful and miraculous transaction, were as reasonable as to expect to find the nightly pillar that enlightened the Hebrew camp, or the fountains which followed them on their march through the Wilderness.

Another still more elevated summit westward, called Mount Serbal, has been considered as having rival pretensions to the honours claimed for the Mount of Moses; but these do not seem to be better founded. It exhibits no volcanic appearances; and its five peaks, according to the general theory on the subject, militate against the idea that it is the Horeb and Sinai of Scripture. That it was first selected as the representative of Sinai was probably owing to its great elevation; but the hypothesis is altoge-

ther gratuitous which considers that sacred mountain^{*} as pre-eminently high. Notwithstanding the many theories and conjectures of travellers, the probability remains stronger in favour of Gebel Katerin and Gebel Mousa than of any other ; however difficult it may be to reconcile their scenery or position with the several events recorded in Holy Writ. There is yet room for future investigation ; and it is possible that, by examining the different localities with more attention to the Sacred Record than to the legends of monks and Bedouins, further light may yet be thrown on this interesting geographical problem.

Little dependence can be placed on local tradition. Burckhardt expresses his disappointment at being able to trace so very few of the ancient Hebrew names of the Old Testament in the modern geography of the peninsula. With the exception of Sinai and a few others, the appellatives are all of Arabic derivation ; and the incongruous association of Moses and St Catherine is a proof how little reliance is to be placed upon them. Sinai is two or three times mentioned in the Koran ; but in neither instance is there any reference to its relative locality. “ Call to mind,” says Mohammed (chap. ii.), “ when we accepted your covenant, and lifted up the mountain of Sinai over you ;” alluding to a ridiculous legend, that, when the Israelites refused to receive the law of Moses, God tore up the mountain by the roots, and shook it over their heads, to terrify them into compliance.

The three highest eminences in this peninsula are, St Catherine, Serbal, and Shomar. To the two latter has also been attributed the distinction of having witnessed the promulgation of the decalogue.

Burckhardt ascended Mount Serbal, though he had no means of ascertaining its elevation. The upper region is described as almost perpendicular: it is approached from below over sharp rocks, without any path, and climbed by means of steps in several parts, cut through the rock with great labour, or regularly formed with large loose stones. The summit of the eastern peak consists of one immense mass of granite, the smoothness of which is broken only by a few partial fissures, presenting an appearance not unlike the ice-covered summits of the Alps. When seen from the bottom, it looks as sharp as a needle, but it terminates in a platform of about 130 feet in circumference. The surface of every block presented inscriptions written in characters of a foot in length, the greater part of which are illegible. These facts, together with the road leading up to the top, afford strong grounds to presume that this singular eminence was an ancient place of devotion. "From these circumstances," says our intelligent traveller, "I am persuaded that Mount Serbal was at one period the chief place of pilgrimage in the peninsula; and that it was thus considered as the mountain where Moses received the Tables of the Law; though I am equally convinced, from a perusal of the Scriptures, that the Israelites encamped in the Upper Sinai, and that either Gebel Mousa or Mount St Catherine is the real Horeb."

Om Shomar lies more towards the south, and nearer the point where the two gulfs separate. It rises in a mass of almost perpendicular cliffs, in a country the aspect of which is that of the most savage wildness. "The devastations of torrents are every where visible,—the sides of the mountain be-

ing rent by them in numberless directions. The surface of the naked rocks is blackened by the sun ; all vegetation is dried and withered, and the whole scene presents nothing but utter desolation and hopeless barrenness." The highest peak tapers to a point, and appears to be inaccessible ; but, at 200 feet below, a beautiful view opens on the Gulf of Suez. Whether Sinai may be identified with this eminence or not, it is probably the same range of mountains ; and the idea is not extravagant that would consider the bold promontory of Ras Mohammed, the seaward front of the Mount of God. This rugged and lofty chain is visible from both arms of the gulf ; and, perhaps, as a lively traveller has remarked, the fisherman in his bark must have heard the thunder and seen the cloudy pavilion when the God of Israel spoke to his Chosen People.*

The whole of this rugged tract is intersected with innumerable wadys, some of which are nearly as barren as the rocks ; while others nourish shrubs, fruit-trees, and occasionally a most luxuriant vegetation. The valley of the mountainous range, called El Tyh, which forms the northern boundary of the Sinai group, affords excellent pasturage and fine springs, though not in great numbers. Wady Leja, near Gebel Mousa, is represented by Burckhardt as most delightful. It is small ; but so brilliant was the verdure, and so aromatic the perfume of the orange-trees that grew in an orchard, that he fancied himself transported from the cliffs of the wilderness to the delicious groves of Antioch. It is supposed to be the valley of Rephidim, and opens into an extensive plain towards the north-east.

* Scenes and Impressions in Egypt, p. 63.

Wady Sheik, and its continuation Wady Feiran, which separates Mount Serbal from the Upper Sinai, is considered the finest valley in this part of the Arabian peninsula. From the higher extremity an uninterrupted succession of gardens and date-plantations extends downwards for several miles; and almost every one of these has a well, by means of which the grounds are irrigated during the whole year. The waters collected from the lateral ravines empty themselves through Feiran into the Gulf of Suez. Wady Kyd, between Shomar and the Gulf of Akaba, is a very romantic spot, and one of the most famous date-valleys in the district. It is traversed by a small rivulet, overshadowed by trees, with fine verdure on its banks. The rocks that overhang it almost meet, and give to the whole the appearance of a grotto. Similar descriptions might be extended to numerous other valleys; but enough has been said to convey a tolerable idea of the nature of this remarkable peninsula.

A region so extensive as Arabia, varying in elevation, in climate, and soil, must naturally be subject to considerable irregularities of temperature, as well as of natural productions. While the inhabitants of the plains and valleys suffer from heat, and enjoy perpetual abundance, those on the mountains are obliged to wrap themselves in sheepskins, and subsist by plunder. In the desert the thermometer is generally above 100° during the night, at 108° in the morning, and in the course of the day it rises to 110° , and sometimes higher, even in the coolest and best shaded parts. All travellers who have visited the coasts of the Red Sea appear to have been oppressed by the extraordinary heat, and to have considered

the temperature of other tropical countries as moderate in comparison. Burckhardt remarks that the climate of Mecca is sultry and unwholesome ; the rocks that enclose its narrow valley interrupt the northern breezes, and reflect the rays of the sun with redoubled intensity. The air at Medina is much colder in winter ; but in summer it is said that the heat is greater here than in any other part of Hejaz. At Mocha, it averages from 90° to 95° in July ; owing to its vicinity to the arid sands of Africa, over which the south-east wind blows for so long a continuance as not to be cooled in its short passage across the strait.* In Muscat the thermometer varies from 92° to 102° during the day, and the heat of the night is felt to be almost equally oppressive and unfavourable to European constitutions. Among the mountains of Petræa the diversity is much greater ; while, in the upper regions, the maximum in May was 75° ; in the lower country, and particularly on the seashore, it stood from 102° to 105° , and sometimes at 110° . In the desert, near the Euphrates, Griffith observed that the variation in the thermometer, from two to four in the day and the same hours in the morning, was frequently sixteen degrees ; and that, during the prevalence of the land-winds, it rose to 132° under the tent, and 156° when exposed to the sun's rays.† The highlands on the coast, and in some parts of the interior, enjoy a more temperate atmosphere. Near Sanaa, about 200 miles inland from Mocha, Niebuhr was informed that ice had been seen. Storms of hail are not uncommon at Taïf ; and snow sometimes falls

* Valentia, vol. ii. chap. 8.

† Travels in Arabia, p. 384.

on the hills near Medina. In winter the whole of the Upper Sinai is often covered with snow ; many of the passes are choked up, so that the mountains of Moses and St Catherine are inaccessible. Mr Fazakerley, who ascended them in the month of February, found it very deep ; though he fared better than Pietro della Valle, who went up in a violent snow-storm, and gives a lamentable account of his adventures on that occasion. For this peculiarity of climate Arabia is partly indebted to its position, hemmed in between the continents of Asia and Africa, and effectually debarred by the latter from the influence of the south-west monsoon, which blows during summer on the coasts of India, and ushers in the periodical rains.

One great characteristic of this vast continental desert is aridity. Whole years occasionally pass away without rain, the drought is consequently extreme, and destructive of all vegetation. All the highland tracts, and the different ridges which shoot forth into the interior, by attracting clouds and vapours, enjoy the advantage of frequent and copious showers. Those rains occur at different times of the year, according to the position of the mountains. On the western declivity of Yemen, and along the shores of the Red Sea, they commence in June and terminate in September. This district is also refreshed by a spring rain ; while, on the eastern declivity of the same mountains, the wet season is between the middle of November and the middle of February. In Hadramaut and Oman, and on the coasts of the Persian Gulf, it extends from the middle of February to the middle of April. Thus it would seem that the rains make the tour of the pe-

ninsula every season according to the prevalence of the winds. They often fall, however, in storms rather than showers ; and, instead of irrigating the ground, are drunk up by the thirsty sands, or collected in sudden pools. In the valleys, near Taïf, Burekhardt was overtaken by a tempest of thunder, hail, and rain, which covered Wady Noman three feet deep ; innumerable cascades immediately tumbled from the sides of the hills, and the inundation became general, so as to render travelling for a time impossible. The historians of Mecca record various instances in which that town was completely deluged. In 1626 a torrent rushed so rapidly into the plain, that five hundred of the inhabitants were drowned ; the great mosque was filled ; three sides of it were swept away, and every human being within it perished. There appears to be no general or fixed law by which these periodical rains are determined ; and it is only the skirts, as it were, of the Arabian peninsula, that enjoy this necessary provision of nature for sustaining the productive powers of the earth. The same latitudes in Asia and Africa present the same peculiarities. Persia, except where it is watered by the Euphrates and the Indus, exhibits all that frightful sterility which has been depicted by the historians of Alexander in recording the perils and sufferings of his army while traversing Gedrosia (Mekran). But for the Nile Egypt were a desert ; and if Barbary is more fertile than Sahara, it is because the Atlas range attracts the moisture of the clouds.

Perhaps the most singular feature in the Arabian continent is its entire want of rivers or perennial streams. This deficiency has indeed been gene-

rously supplied by the industry of geographers, who have traced winding lines in various directions, terminating, after a long course, on the margin of the ocean. Ptolemy reckoned four rivers in Arabia Felix; Diodorus and Strabo describe several fine streams; and Herodotus speaks of one traversing the desert, at the distance of twelve days' journey. By the times of D'Anville and Niebuhr, these had greatly diminished; and modern travellers have discovered that names, which have so long flourished as pompous rivers, are either quite imaginary, or only temporary currents, which are absorbed in the sand, and never reach the sea except after copious rains. The great Aftan of Ptolemy, on which stood the city of Yemama, and which is still made to roll its tributary waters into the Persian Gulf, is now found to be a very modest brook, nourished by the clouds, and having no existence but during one season of the year.* Those at Aden, Mocha, and other places, are of the same description. The Jews and poorer inhabitants erect their huts of wicker-work in the dusty channels. In some of the wadys there are streams of considerable size that run a course of sixty or eighty leagues; but they are generally drunk up in the sandy belt before reaching either gulf. The lakes in the interior, mentioned by the Greek and Turkish geographers, must have been temporary collections of water formed by the rains.

The winds are extremely variable, and their refreshing influence is but partially felt. During summer the heat in the lower plains on the coast is so steady and equable, that the atmosphere re-

* Notice Géographique sur l'Arabie Centrale. Mengin's Histoire de l'Égypte, vol. ii. p. 551. D'Anville, Géog. Ancienne.

mains in a state of repose. No change of temperature takes place to set the air in motion ; hence dead calms occur which sometimes continue for sixty days without interruption. The nature of the winds differs according to the point of the compass from which they blow, or the tract over which they respectively pass. On the shores of the Persian Gulf, the south-east wind is accompanied with a degree of moisture, which, when the heat is intense, occasions violent perspiration, and on that account is deemed more disagreeable than the north-west, which is more torrid, and heats metals in the shade. Water placed in jars, exposed to the current of this hot wind, is rendered very cool by the effect of the sudden evaporation ; but its blasts often suffocate both men and animals. In the lower part of the Red Sea, the winds blow from the same quarter about nine months in the year, or from the end of August till May ; but from Cosseir to Suez, the opposite monsoon or north wind prevails.

Arabia is frequently visited by the terrible simoom, called by the natives *shamiel*, or the wind of Syria, under whose pestilential influence all nature seems to languish and expire. This current prevails chiefly on the frontiers, and more rarely in the interior. It is in the arid plains about Bussora, Bagdad, Aleppo, and in the environs of Mecca, that it is most dreaded ; and only during the intense heats of summer. The Arabs, being accustomed to an atmosphere of great purity, are said to perceive its approach by its sulphurous odour, and by an unusual redness in the quarter whence it comes. The sky, at other times serene and cloudless, appears lurid and heavy ; the sun loses his

splendour, and appears of a violet colour. The air, saturated with particles of the finest sand, becomes thick, fiery, and unfit for respiration. The coldest substances change their natural qualities; marble, iron, and water, are hot, and deceive the hand that touches them. Every kind of moisture is absorbed; the skin is parched and shrivelled; paper cracks as if it were in the mouth of an oven. When inhaled by men or animals, the simoom produces a painful feeling as of suffocation. The lungs are too rarefied for breathing, and the body is consumed by an internal heat, which often terminates in convulsions and death. The carcasses of the dead exhibit symptoms of immediate putrefaction, similar to what is observed to take place on bodies deprived of life by thunder, or the effect of electricity.

When this pestilence visits towns or villages, the inhabitants shut themselves up, the streets are deserted, and the silence of night every where reigns. Travellers in the desert sometimes find a crevice in the rocks; but if remote from shelter, they must abide the dreadful consequences. The only means of escaping from these destructive blasts is to lie flat on the ground until they pass over, as they always move at a certain height in the atmosphere. Instinct teaches even animals to bow down their heads, and bury their nostrils in the sand. The danger is most imminent when they blow in squalls, which raise up clouds of sand in such quantities, that it becomes impossible to see to the distance of a few yards. In these cases the traveller generally lies down on the lee side of his camel; but as the desert is soon blown up to the level of its body, both are obliged frequently to rise and replace themselves in a new position, in

order to avoid being entirely covered. In many instances, however, from weariness, faintness, or sleepiness, occasioned by the great heat, and often from a feeling of despair, both men and animals remain on the ground, and in twenty minutes they are buried under a load of sand. Caravans are sometimes swallowed up; and whole armies have perished miserably in these inhospitable deserts.

Such are the effects of these resistless whirlwinds; but the noxious qualities ascribed to them, though pernicious to health, have certainly been exaggerated by credulous or ill-informed travellers. Their deadly influence seems to arise solely from heat contracted in passing across burning wastes; hence, when suddenly inhaled, they occasion sickness and suffocation, and even those livid appearances that have been ascribed to atmospheric poison. The simoom usually lasts three days; but if it exceed that time it becomes insupportable. It blows from the east and the north, and is of such excessive aridity, that water sprinkled on the ground evaporates in a few minutes. When the wind changes to the south, every thing is in the opposite extreme,—the air is damp, and substances when handled feel clammy and wet to the touch. The predominating winds in the Nejed are the gharbi, or south-west, which is dry and pernicious to cultivation, and occasionally blows from the same point seven months in succession; the hesiah, or west wind, is of a burning heat, and prevails in June, July, and August. The shamal, or north, is cool and refreshing; the jenoub and sharki (south and east), “the fathers of the rains,” are the welcome harbingers of clouds, which soon dissolve in grateful showers.

A description of Arabia necessarily includes the two gulfs that form its eastern and western boundaries. Both of these seas figure in the early annals of Oriental commerce ; they are filled with sunken rocks, sand-banks, and small islands, which throw impediments in the way of free and safe navigation. Pliny has remarked, that nowhere are the depositions from rivers more perceptible than at the mouth of the Euphrates. He mentions the famous reservoir, which he calls Baramalchum (Bahr el Malce, *i. e.* the Royal Lake), formed by Nebuchadnezzar, who raised a mound, or wall, to confine the waters at the mouth of the Tigris. The Persian Gulf is included by Nearchus, Arrian, Strabo, and other Greek writers, under the name of the Erythræan Sea,—so denominated, as they allege, from a certain king, Erythrus, who reigned and was buried in one of the islands at its estuary. Ormuz stands associated with the ancient wealth of India ; and Tyrus and Aradus are supposed to be the cradle of the Tyrians and Phenicians. The Bahrein group on the Arabian coast have always been, and still are, celebrated for their pearl-fishery. In the neighbourhood of these islands fresh springs are found in the middle of the salt water. The Persian coast is safer and more elevated than the Arabian. Near the upper end the gulf is forty leagues in breadth, and about seventy in the middle ; but the strait at Cape Mussendom does not exceed fifty-five miles.

The Red Sea occupies a deep rocky cavity, extending about 1160 miles in length, and its mean breadth may be taken at about 120. Strabo has compared its shape to that of a broad river ; and, as has already been noticed, it does not receive the

waters of a single tributary stream. The name greatly puzzled the ancients, and has occasioned in later times a display of much superfluous learning to determine whether it was derived from the colour of the water, the reflection of the sand-banks and the neighbouring mountains, or the solar rays struggling through a dense atmosphere. These various conjectures are set at rest ; both the air and water are unusually clear ; the theory of King Erythrus is exploded ; and the name is now admitted to be merely a Greek translation of the “ Sea of Edom ” (a Hebrew word denoting Red), so frequently mentioned by the Sacred Writers. The surface is diversified with a number of islands ; some of which, such as Kotembel, and Gebel Tar near Loheia, exhibit volcanic appearances. The western coast is bold, and has more depth of water than the eastern, where the coral rocks are gradually encroaching on their native element. These reefs are found dispersed over the whole gulf, rising in some places ten fathoms above the water. The bottom is covered with an abundant harvest of this substance as well as of certain plants ; and, if examined in calm weather, it has the appearance of verdant meadows and submarine forests,—phenomena which procured this gulf the appellation of Yam Zuph from the Jews, and Bahr Souf with the Arabs, signifying the “ Sea of Green Weeds.” These beautiful productions attracted the admiration of antiquity. Strabo seems to allude to them when he speaks of trees, resembling the laurel and the olive, growing at the bottom and along the eastern coast of the Red Sea, which at ebb tide were left uncovered, though at other times they were wholly under water ;—a

circumstance deemed the more surprising when contrasted with the nakedness of the adjacent shores. Bûrckhardt remarks, that the coral in the inlet of Akaba is red, and that in the Gulf of Suez the white is chiefly to be seen ;—facts which may reconcile the discordant statements of Bruce, Valentia, Henniker, and other modern travellers.

All who have frequented the Red Sea, have observed the luminous appearance or phosphorescence of its waters. “It was beautiful,” says a picturesque writer who sailed from Mocha to Cosseir, “to look down into this brightly transparent sea, and mark the coral here in large masses of honeycomb-rock, there in light branches of a pale red hue, and the beds of green seaweed, and the golden sand, and the shells, and the fish sporting round the vessel, and making colours of a beauty to the eye, which is not their own. Twice or thrice we ran on after dark for an hour or two ; and though we were all familiar with the sparkling of the sea round the boat at night, never have I seen it in other waters so superlatively splendid. A rope dipped in it and drawn forth came up as a string of gems ; but with a life, and light, and motion, the diamond does not know.”* Those sea-lights have been explained by a diversity of causes ; but the singular brilliancy of the Red Sea seems owing to fish-spawn and animalculæ, a conjecture which receives some corroboration from the circumstance, that travellers who mention it visited the gulf during the spawning period,—that is, between the latter end of December and the end of February. The coral banks are less numerous in the

* Scenes and Impressions, p. 35.

southern parts. It deserves notice, that Dr Shaw and Mr Bruce have stated,—what could only be true, so far as their own experience went,—that they observed no species of weed or flag; and the latter proposes to translate Yam Zuph, “the Sea of Coral,”—a name as appropriate as that of Edom.

Bab el Mandeb, the narrowest part of the gulf, is the strait at its entrance, which is between twelve and fourteen miles across; it is divided by the island of Perim, which stands about three miles from the Arabian shore. Strabo relates, that the Egyptian merchants who had possession of this sea used to draw a chain across to the African side to prevent the intrusion of foreigners; an assertion which is probably to be classed among the other marvels of the ancients. The high land of Africa and the Peak of Assab are distinctly visible, although the latter is reckoned seventy miles distant from Mocha. This proves that there is a great degree of refraction in the atmosphere. In farther confirmation of this fact, Lord Valentia mentions a singular phenomenon which occurred, and which has also been noticed by the ancients. The setting sun had the appearance of a flaming column, having totally lost its usual round form; a splendid testimony in favour of Agatharcides, who also says that it rose like a pillar of fire.* The northern part of the Red Sea separates into the two gulfs of Akaba or Ailah and Suez, called by the Greeks and Romans the Elanitic and Heroopolitan, from the cities that stood at their extremities. The former is dangerous, owing

* Valentia's Travels, vol. ii. p. 359. “Nec sol ad disci formam se habet, sed crassam refert columnam principio.”—Hudson. *Geograph. Minor. Agathar.* Diodor. lib. iii. cap. 3.

to its shoals and coral rocks; the common opinion that it terminates in two points has been corrected by Bûrckhardt, no such bifurcation being found to exist. The Gulf of Suez extends about 160 miles in length, and is of safer navigation; its depth varying from nine to fourteen fathoms, with a sandy bottom. On the Elanitic side, the whole coast, from Ras Mohammed to Akaba, consists of a succession of bays bounded by rocky headlands. Here, as in other parts, the shores have undergone a material change. On the Arabian coast, the water has retired, so that towns anciently mentioned as sea-ports are now several leagues inland. The land at Suez presents evidence that the sea had then extended much farther northward—appearances which tend to favour the hypothesis that the Arabian Gulf was at some remote period a strait which united the Indian and Mediterranean Seas; and that the isthmus which now divides them has been subsequently filled up with sand. The tides and medium level of this gulf are subject to great variation from the influence of the periodical winds; so much so, that Niebuhr tells us the point near Suez may be sometimes crossed on foot.

This western arm of the Red Sea has been rendered famous by the miraculous passage of the Israelites. The exact spot where this event occurred, as well as the line of march and different encampments of the chosen race, have become too obscure through time and change to be traced with accuracy. Shaw and Pococke have given routes of their journeyings, probably copied from older maps; but many of their stations must, of necessity, be matter of conjecture. The natives of the

coast point out indifferently the valley of Baideah, nearly seventy miles down ; the passage from Suez across the narrow arm that runs up to the port ; and other points on the shore farther southward, opposite Ayoun Mousa, and the Hammam Faraoun. Niebuhr fixes upon Suez as the spot at which they crossed. The narrow gulf before that town, he observes, appears at first sight to be only the breadth of a river in comparison with the open sea, and therefore too small to have been chosen by the Almighty as the scene of the manifestation of his power. This led him to suppose that the Israelites must have passed at some leagues southward of Suez ; an opinion which he changed on measuring the breadth of the gulf at that place, which he found to be 3500 feet, and farther north it was still wider. " If the Children of Israel," he continues, " passed the sea at Kolzoum, the miracle would indeed be less than if they crossed it near Baideah. But it is a mistake to suppose that the multitude could cross here without a prodigy ; for even in the present day no caravan crosses here in going from Cairo to Mount Sinai, notwithstanding that it would materially shorten the distance. It must naturally have been more difficult to the Israelites thousands of years ago, when the gulf was probably broader and deeper, and extended farther northward." This supposition of the Danish traveller fairly meets the objection, that if the Israelites had crossed at Suez, Pharaoh might easily have doubled the point and overtaken them, without risking the loss of his army by entering the channel in pursuit. When Burckhardt left Suez the tide was at flood, and he was obliged to make the tour of the whole

creek, which he says can be forded at low water ; but in winter time, and immediately after the rainy season, the circuit is rendered still greater, because the low grounds to the northward, for many miles, are then inundated, and become so swampy that the camels cannot pass them.

The ingenious Dr Shaw objects to the opinion which fixes the passage opposite Ayoun Mousa, on the ground that the water there must have been too shallow to drown so many Egyptians ; and this objection applies still more strongly to the theory of Niebuhr. According to the first of these learned travellers, the Israelites must have crossed lower down, opposite the desert of Shur. Supposing Rameses to have been Cairo, there are two roads, he remarks, by which they might have been conducted to Pihahiroth on the coast ; the one through valleys which are bounded on each side by the mountains of the Lower Thebais ; the other, more to the northward, having these mountains for several leagues on the right, and the desert on the left, till it turns through a singular ravine in the northernmost range into the valley of Baideah. The latter he presumes to have been the course taken by the Israelites. Succoth, the first station, signifies only “ a place of tents ;” and Etham, the second station, he considers as probably on the edge of the mountainous district just alluded to. Here the Israelites were ordered to turn from their line of march and encamp before Pihahiroth, in the mouth of the gullet or defile betwixt Migdol and the sea. This valley he supposes to be identified with that of Baideah, which signifies Miraculous, and which also bears the name of Tiah-Beni-Israel, or the Path of the Israelites. Baal-

zephon, over against which they encamped, is alleged to be the mountain still called Gebel Attakah, or the Hill of Deliverance; and at the distance of ten miles from this is the desert of Shur, where the Israelites landed. The gulf in this quarter would be capacious enough to cover a numerous army, and yet might be traversed by the Hebrew fugitives in a night; whereas lower down, from Wady Gharendel to Tor, the channel is from ten to twelve leagues broad, which is too great a distance to have been travelled by a multitude with so many encumbrances as they carried with them. Having once entered this valley, it might well be said that the Wilderness had "shut them in," inasmuch as the mountains of Mokattem would deny them a passage to the southward, while those near Suez would be a barrier towards the north.

Burckhardt seems inclined to follow the opinions of Shaw and Niebuhr. Referring to the distance between Ayoun Mousa and the Well of Howara, he conjectures that this is the desert of three days, said to have been crossed by the Israelites immediately after their passing the Red Sea, and at the end of which they arrived at Marah. "In moving with a whole nation, the march (nearly forty miles) may well be supposed to have occupied three days; and the bitter well at Marah, which was sweetened by Moses, corresponds exactly with that of Howara. This is the usual route to Mount Sinai, and was probably, therefore, that which the Israelites took on their escape from Egypt; provided it be admitted that they crossed the gulf near Suez, as Niebuhr with good reason conjectures. There is no other road of three days' march on the way from Suez

towards Sinai, nor is there any other well absolutely bitter on the whole of this coast, as far as Ras Mōhammed. The complaints of the bitterness of the water by the Children of Israel, who had been accustomed to the sweet water of the Nile, are such as may be daily heard from the Egyptian servants and peasants who travel in Arabia."

With respect to the means employed by Moses to sweeten the waters, Burekhardt frequently inquired among the Arabs in different parts, whether they possessed any means of effecting such a change, by throwing wood into it, or by any other process; but he never could learn that such an art was known. Forskal, who travelled with Niebuhr as botanist, indicates a plant having this property, which is said to be known in the East Indies; and Burekhardt suggests the red berry of the gharkad, a shrub which grows in the neighbourhood, and which he thought might perhaps effect this change, in the same manner as is done by the juice of pomegranate grains. If Howara is the Marah of Exodus (chap. xv. 23), then Wady Gharendel is probably Elim, with its twelve springs and seventy palm-trees. But, as we have already observed, it is vain to reason from modern appearances. The retirement of the sea, and the increase of coral shoals, has so much altered the gulf, that no decisive arguments can be built on the present shallowness of the waters, or breadth of the channel. We know that in former times ships entered the harbour of Kolzoum (the Clysmā or Arsinoë of the Greeks), but in consequence of the retreat of the waters that place was deserted. Suez, which was not in existence towards the end of the 15th century, rose on its ruins. Besides, those who endea-

vour to account for this phenomenon by natural causes, forget that the transaction was miraculous. Even if we suppose that the agency of the tides was employed by Providence in favouring the passage of the Israelites, the east wind, which, blowing all night, divided the waters of the gulf in the middle, laying the channel bare, as between two walls, was clearly supernatural, since the monsoon there blows constantly from the north and the south. And as this unprecedented ebb of the waters must have been supernatural, not less so was the sudden reflux by which the Egyptians were completely overwhelmed.

Contrary to the generally-received opinion on this subject, Lord Valentia has started a theory, that the Israelites must have crossed to the northward of Suez; as the presumption is, that the marshes, which extend for about twenty-five miles in that direction, were then overflowed with water. This supposition contains nothing inconsistent with Scripture-history or with natural appearances; and it removes a difficulty which Dr Shaw could not reconcile, except by alleging that Josephus had been guilty of making "too hasty statements," in causing the Children of Jacob, encumbered as they were with their families, cattle, baggage, and kneading-troughs, to perform a march of ninety Roman miles in three days.

The remembrance of this memorable transaction is preserved in the local traditions of the inhabitants. The Wells of Moses (Ayoun Mousa), and the Baths of Pharaoh (Hammam Faraoun), are associated with the names of the Jewish deliverer and the Egyptian monarch; and the superstitious Arabs call the gulf the *Bahr el Kolzoum*, or Sea of De-

struction, in whose roaring waters they still pretend to hear the cries and wailings of the ghosts of the drowned Egyptians.*

. Of the navigation of the Arabian seas, the ancients uniformly spoke with awe and apprehension, as every where full of peril and difficulty. Arrian, Agatharcides, Strabo, and Abulfeda, unite in drawing the same terrific picture of tempests, whirlpools, and sunk mountains, with which these inhospitable waters were infested. The storms dashed their ships on the rocks, and the rocks cut their cables; while the inhabitants were more terrible than either, for they plundered and ate, or made slaves of all who escaped the wrecks and the waves. The first navigators never ventured to encounter these complicated dangers until they had instituted solemn festivals, or performed sacrifice to Neptune; and those who had the fortune to return in safety were regarded as prodigies, and adorned with garlands and crowns of gold. Nearchus, who sailed in the year 326 B. C., by order of Alexander, from the Indus up the Persian Gulf, set out with more pomp of preparation, and met with more hardships and adventures than Columbus did in circumnavigating half the globe. At sea were sand-banks, shoals, and whales; on shore nothing was beheld but desolate plains and shaggy monsters of men, half-naked can-

* Diodorus seems distinctly to allude to the passage of the Israelites: "It has been an ancient report among the Ichthyophagi, continued down to them from their forefathers, that by a mighty reflux of the waters, which happened in former days, the whole gulf became dry land, and appeared green all over, the water overflowing the opposite shore; and that, all the ground being thus left bare to the very lowest bottom of the gulf, the sea, by an extraordinary high tide, returned again into its ancient channel." (Lib. ii. cap. 3.) It is not unimportant to find a heathen writer unconsciously bearing testimony to the truth of Scripture history.

nibals with claws, who lived in caves and holes in the sand, and in huts made of olive-branches or the ribs of fishes.*

The descriptions given of the Arabian Gulf, and of the manners of the inhabitants, are equally appalling. The coasts are represented as peopled with a race of savages, who fed on plants and leaves, dwelt in huts built on trees, and lived on fish, which they roasted on the rocks by the heat of the sun. They were expert in climbing, and could leap from branch to branch with great celerity. They excelled as marksmen and hunters, and caught elephants by cutting the trees nearly through against which they leaned to sleep. Their funerals they celebrated with mirth and dancing. When weary of life they strangled themselves, as well as their aged parents and infirm relations, by tying a bullock's tail round their necks.

All wonders naturally increase in proportion as they are distant and unknown; and it cannot be doubted that ignorance and imagination did much to enhance the difficulties, and magnify the dangers of the Arabian seas. Avarice and speculations in commerce tended to aggravate these ideal horrors. The Romans and Egyptians had engrossed the trade of the East: willing to retain the profits of this intercourse themselves, and anxious to exclude foreigners from their ports, they cunningly spread ex-

* "Omnino hæc Arabiæ continentis præternavigatio plena est periculi; regio impetuosa, infesta cautibus, atque scopulis inaccessa, horris ubique plena."—(Arrian, *Perip. Mar. Eryth.* p. 12.) Pliny (*lib. vii. cap. 24*) speaks of the natives inhabiting these coasts as "hairy all over except the head, and clothed with the skins of fishes." Diodorus (*lib. ii. iii.*) describes the elephant-eaters, ostrich-eaters, fish-eaters, dog-eaters, locust-eaters, wood-eaters, &c., dwelling near the Red Sea; as also men with cloven tongues, that spoke two languages at once.

aggerated accounts of the perils to be encountered in visiting those mysterious regions from which they drew their wealth; as if nature herself, by the impenetrable deserts and oceans with which she had surrounded them, had set bounds to the cupidity of other mortals. The terrors of antiquity have been perpetuated in the modern nomenclature of the country. Hadramaut, the Land of Incense, means the Region of Death. The strait so formidable to the early navigators, and often indeed so fatal to their inexperience, the Arabs call Bab el Mandeb, or the Gate of Tears; while the opposite coast, black and rugged, they styled the Cape of Burials, on whose rocky steep their fancy heard the shrill spirit of the storm, as he sat in clouded wrath and enjoyed the death of the mariner. The light of science has dispelled these superstitious fancies. The navigation of that gulf is still intricate, its shoals numerous, and fatal mistakes are occasionally made; but nautical skill has rendered these disasters less frequent.

From the mouth of the strait to Gebel Tar, the soundings are from twelve to fifty fathoms, and there is a good landmark in the great mosque at Mocha. "The entrance to Bab el Mandeb," says Mrs Lushington, "affords a sight equally unique and grand. A rush of the sea appears to have divided a bed of hard black rock, and thus to have forced a channel for itself of two or three miles in breadth. This rock rises on each side, dark, barren, and cheerless; that on the left is Perim; in some places a few blades of grass endeavour to force themselves through the crevices; but even fresh water must be brought from the Abyssinian shore,—the scarcity of this most necessary article being thus added to many other

privations.”* On this desolate spot Colonel Murray and a detachment of British troops were stationed during the French invasion of Egypt at the beginning of the present century. Lord Valentia has mentioned several errors discovered by Captain Court, who completed his survey in 1806. He states, that the actual distance between the island of Perim and the nearest part of Africa is only ten miles and a half, instead of sixteen, as laid down in the chart of Sir Home Popham ; that the distance between the two shores, in latitude 13°, is only thirty-five miles, instead of fifty-two ; and that there exists a shoal in that latitude which narrows the channel to fifteen miles, and is entirely omitted by Sir Home.†

To the ignorance and rude apparatus of the Arabs the Red Sea is still a dangerous passage. Not daring to venture into the open waters, the native pilots coast round the shores, at the hazard of being dashed in pieces upon jutting rocks, or stranded on coral reefs. Their ordinary vessels are dows and khanjas. The latter are large boats, but without any deck, save a little on the bows and that of the fore awning, under which is the cabin, open to the front, but without ports or windows ; light and air being admitted through a neat open wicket at the side. This is all the improvement that has been made since the days of Arrian, who speaks of the small boats made of skins and plaited stuffs, or of single logs of wood called monoxyla, which the ancient inhabitants used for fishing pearls, employing osier baskets instead of nets.‡ The dows are of a singular construc-

* Journey from India, chap. ii. † Travels, vol. ii. p. 403.

‡ The rude structure of their boats in former times was more the effect of superstition than of ignorance. “ It was an ancient preju-

tion ; their height, according to Ali Bey, being equal to a third of their length. The ropes are made of the bark of palm-trees, and the sails of extremely coarse cotton. To guard against the shoals, they have a false keel, which lessens the shock, and saves the ship if the weather is not rough. It is usual to cast anchor at night, except when crossing the gulf at its full breadth.

The vessel in which Niebuhr embarked at Suez for Jidda was large enough to have carried at least forty guns ; and, besides her own freight, towed after her three large shallops and one small, the former being filled with passengers, horses, sheep, and women belonging to the crews. On the appearance of a storm the sailors leaped into the boats and be-took themselves to the shore. The pilot was constantly begging brandy of those on board, on pretence that he could not see the hills or the outline of the coast unless his sight was cleared by drinking a little strong liquor. On nearing the destined port their joy was excessive ; cannons and muskets were fired, the ship and the boats were illuminated with lamps and lanterns ; all was exultation and gratitude for the perils they had escaped.

The superiority of European science has in a great measure set the impediments of rocks and winds at defiance. The British flag waves in every port of the Red Sea from Suez to Aden. It has even been proposed to open a communication through that channel with India by means of steam, as much more expeditious than the ordinary passage by

dice of those frequenting the Erythræan Sea," says Procopius, "that rocks attracted iron, though the Roman ships found no such thing." Hence the Arabs carefully excluded that dangerous metal from their naval architecture. The Romans forbade the sale of iron to the Indians and Ethiopians under pain of death.—*De Bell. Persic.*

the Cape of Good Hope. Sir John Malcolm, in a paper on this subject which appeared in the Edinburgh Cabinet Library, states that for nine months in the year packets from India may be delivered at Alexandria in twenty-four days, and at Suez, with proper supplies of fuel, in three weeks. The voyage from Bombay to Aden (1640 miles) was performed, in December 1830, in ten days and nineteen hours.*

TABLE OF GEOGRAPHICAL POSITIONS.

Names of Places.	Lat. North.	Long. East.	Authorities.
	° ' "	° ' "	
Mecca,.....	21 28 9	40 14 45	Ali Bey.
Medina,.....	25 13 ..	40 12 15	Ali Bey.
Jidda,.....	21 32 42	39 5 45	Ali Bey.
Yembo,.....	24 7 6	37 32 15	Ali Bey.
Gonfode,.....	19 7 ..	41 42 ..	Niebuhr.
Loheia,.....	15 42 ..	42 8 45	Niebuhr.
Beit el Fakih,	14 31 17	.. .. .	Niebuhr.
Taas,.....	13 34 7	.. .. .	Niebuhr.
Mocha,.....	13 16 ..	43 10 15	Con. des Tems.
Sanaa,.....	15 21 ..	44 .. .	Niebuhr.
Aden,.....	12 32 ..	.. .. .	Niebuhr.
Muscat,.....	23 38 ..	59 15 .	Buckingham.
Katif,.....	26 20 ..	49 50 ..	Jomard.
Yemama,.....	24 .. ..	.. .. .	Jomard.
Bahrein,.....	26 18 ..	50 35 ..	Sadlier.
Deraiah,.....	25 15 ..	46 30 ..	Jomard.
Bussora,.....	30 29 30	47 34 15	Buckingham.
Petra,.....	30 20 ..	.. .. .	Ptolemy.
Ras Mohammed,.....	27 50 ..	.. .. .	Con. des Tems.
Tor,.....	28 12 19	33 33 10	Niebuhr.

* British India, vol. iii. It appears from the published correspondence which took place in October 1832, between Mr Barrow of the Admiralty and Messrs Larpent and Begbie, the chairman and secretary of the East India Trade Committee, that the idea of this steam communication has been abandoned on account of the expense. But it is probable the project will be revived so soon as Parliament comes to a final arrangement on the question respecting the East India Company's privileges. On this subject, to which we shall afterwards advert, see "Remarks on the Advantages and Practicability of Steam Navigation from England to India," by Capt. C. F. Head; "Reports on the Navigation of the Euphrates," by Capt. Chesney; and "An Account of Steam Vessels, &c. in British India," by G. A. Prinseps.

CHAPTER III.

Primitive Inhabitants of Arabia.

Obscurity of Arabian Antiquities—Want of Written Records—Aboriginal Tribes—The Old Extinct Arabs—The Pure Arabs—The Mixed or Naturalized Arabs—Their Attention to their Genealogies—Birth and Expulsion of Ishmael—Building of the Kaaba or Temple at Mecca—Death of Ishmael—Genealogy of Mohammed—The Koreish—Reflections on the National Descent of the Arabs.

THE Arabian antiquities, like those of many other ancient countries, are extremely dark and uncertain. No nation, perhaps, whose history ascends without interruption to so remote an origin, or whose name has been so celebrated, has its political infancy enveloped in so thick a mist of doubt and oblivion. Shut up for so many ages within their rocky peninsula, they appear to have occupied themselves entirely with their own feuds and factions, which left them neither taste nor leisure for other avocations. Their chief study was a knowledge of their genealogies; but these could only preserve isolated facts; and, in so far as appears, they possessed no general annals,—no historical records, either common to the whole nation or to particular tribes. Songs and tradition perpetuated from one generation to another the superstitions and idolatries of their forefathers, the wars and

exploits of their chiefs, and the invasions of their enemies.

In the absence of a national literature, it will not be surprising that we should find the narrative of those distant times so much corrupted by a mixture of absurd and improbable circumstances. Except a few monumental inscriptions and remains of poetry, a mass of traditions, disfigured by fiction and fable, is all that has escaped the oblivious wreck of these dark ages. We are apt to imagine that the zealous Moslems must, in the relentless spirit of their new creed, have swept away every record of the past, as infected with the errors of idolatry; and that the unsparing fanaticism, which proved so calamitous to arts and letters in other countries, had already committed a barbarous parricide on the ancient monuments of its own nation. This supposition, however, is not supported by any fact that has yet come to light. Some writers, indeed, have asserted that, prior to Mohammed, historical annals and writings on different subjects existed. But as no such documents are to be found, or appear to have been consulted by the earliest Arabian historians, these assertions deserve little attention. On the contrary, the most ancient and learned among them agree in the confession, that their old chronicles are traditional and imperfect; and that they could procure but indistinct notions of the times anterior to the Mohammedan era. All the authors extant or known in Europe, who have treated of this period, such as Abulfeda, Hamza of Ispahan, Nuvairi, Masoudi, Al Tabiri, and Abulfarage, flourished after that epoch; and, except what we glean from the pages of sacred or Greek and Roman writers, it is from

them we must derive our knowledge of the legendary ages that preceded the Saracen conquests.*

On one point there is a universal correspondence in their records,—that of their national descent. History and tradition agree in deducing their origin from Kahtan or Joktan, the son of Heber, and of the posterity of Noah by Shem. Among themselves this account has always passed as authentic. Elmacin calls Joktan the father of the Arabs; and Abulfeda adds, that his descendants inhabited Yemen, or the Happy Arabia. The parts of that country bordering on Palestine and Egypt were originally peopled by Cush, the son of Ham, whose descendants formed several petty monarchies and independent governments. Hence the name has been applied both by sacred and profane writers to Arabia as well as Ethiopia. Strabo, Diodorus, and Ptolemy, speak of the Chusi and the island of Chutis as being in the former. The wife of Moses is called an Ethiopian, or native of Cush; but we know that she was an Arabian, and fed her father's flocks in the deserts of Horeb. In the Prophecies of Habakkuk (iii. 7), Cushan and Midian are conjoined as the

* Collections from the works of these Arabic authors were translated and published (1786) by Albert Schultens, in the *Historia Joctanidarum*. The same editor has given specimens of their ancient language and poetry in his *Monumenta Vetust. Arab.* Ismael Abulfeda, prince of Hamah in Syria, a geographer and historian, died in 1345. Masoudi, author of the "Golden Meadows," an historical work, died in 957. Nuvairi, surnamed Al Kendi, author of a *Universal History*, died about 1340. Al Tabiri (a native of Tabreez), the *Livy of the Arabians*, finished his *General History* in 914. By the advice of his friends, he reduced it from 30,000 sheets to a more reasonable size. Price, in his *Essay towards a History of Arabia*, has given translations from it. Elmacin, whose *Historia Saracenica* was published in 1625 by Erpenius, is said to be abridged from Tabiri.